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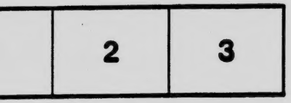

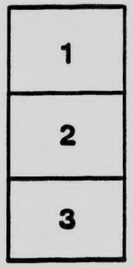

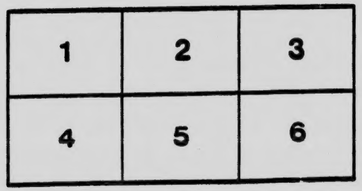

The Running Fight

William Hamilton Osborne

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"Just a stroke of the pen, dear, and my father will be free" (page 279)

THE RUNNING FIGHT

BY
WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE
Author of "The Red Mouse"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
HARRISON FISHER AND
GEORGE BREHM

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TO

W. H. O., Jr. *and* F. S. O.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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I

ONCE, twice, thrice,—failing miserably in his attempt to appear unconcerned,—Ilingsworth paced back and forth in front of Peter V. Wilkinson's big house in Riverside Drive. There it stood: a massive, forbidding, modern pile of limestone, wholly unlike anything in its vicinity. And yet, now that the time had come, Ilingsworth's face wore a confused, half-fearful look, a sense of uncertainty possessed him, which was all the more maddening because so far, at least, there had been no obstacles or delays in this brief, turbulent journey of his; on the contrary, all had gone well with him, and like a falcon in pursuit of its prey he had sped on the straightest of straight lines towards a person of the name of Leslie Wilkinson, and this person, so Ilingsworth assured himself, would soon feel his claws.

From a distance, it is true, Wilkinson's imposing structure had differed little from that which his imagination had led him to expect. It was like the pictures he had seen of it many times in the papers; so like, in fact, that even now in his extremity he could feel the strange, exultant pride he had experienced but a few short months ago when exhibiting to Elinor a counterfeit present-

ment of it in a monthly magazine. And, certainly, he had every right to be proud, at least, so he thought then,—for was not he, Elinor's father, Giles Ilingsworth of Morristown, a close business associate of Peter V. Wilkinson, the great financier? His business associate! Ugh! The very thought of it now made him shiver, tortured him. Indeed, to such an extent that, on nearing the place, his vengeful purpose was kindled anew, and his right hand took a fresh grip on an object of sinister shape hidden in his pocket. At that moment Ilingsworth had but one idea: to get it over with as soon as possible.

But once actually in front of the Wilkinson mansion, when his eyes sweeping upward had failed to catch the point of view of the press photographers, a feeling akin to panic had come over him; and he had passed and repassed, unable to force himself to the point of making an inquiry of a passerby. And yet, what could he do to make certain? And then, as if in answer to his half-smothered cries of "Is this Wilkinson's? There must be no mistake . . ." there fell on his ears the raucous squeal of a megaphone, and, turning whence came the sound, he beheld a crowded tourists' sight-seeing car rolling slowly and laboriously along the Drive, its interlocutor busily engaged in the practice of his genteel profession.

"We now perceive the palatial residence of

Peter V. Wilkinson, the multi-millionaire—the ten-million-dollar steal trust—so called from the habit of its owner in stealing trust companies."

This exceptionally brilliant play upon words was instantly rewarded by a titter from some of the occupants of the car, and the perpetrator, encouraged, proceeded:

"This house contains no less than eighty-four rooms; has twenty-four bathrooms, not to speak of the Turkish bath; has paintings worth a million or two; the rugs cost half a million, at least; and nearly a million pounds of bronze has been used in its construction. Wilkinson's second wife —Maggie Lane, when he married her, now Mrs. Margaret Lane Wilkinson,—is said to be the handsomest woman in the block." He paused to heighten the effect of what was to follow; then trumpeted: "That is, on this end of the block. Peter V. Wilkinson owns seventeen trust companies in the City of New York. He is president of the famous, and now notorious, Interstate Trust Company which closed its doors last week. Also president of the Tri-State Trust—the largest trust company in the world, now toppling on the brink of the precipice. . . ."

So the voice droned on, the car laboured on, and the passengers, already sufficiently gorged with Wilkinson's affairs, would have been spared any further enlightenment had not the eye of this

dispenser of metropolitan information lighted upon Ilingsworth as the latter, trying to escape attention, stepped into the low-arched doorway of the Wilkinson home. The opportunity was too good to be lost.

"The gentleman," proceeded the privileged lecturer, "now entering this impressive imperial mansion, is not Peter V. Wilkinson. Note the sinister expression of the back of his head and the peculiar attitude of his right arm!" The megaphone turned itself directly upon Ilingsworth, and kept on: "He looks like a disgruntled depositor of the Interstate Trust Company—what if he be making a call for the purpose of putting a pill into the proprietor? What?"

Ilingsworth turned an involuntary, startled glance toward the car. Despite a desperate effort at self-control, he was visibly alarmed, and jerked his hand swiftly from the confines of his pocket. Amidst a chorus of laughter at his action the car rolled on. Ilingsworth turned back to the entrance of the house, muttering to himself:

"They little know, they little know . . ."

Presently he pulled himself together and pressed the button with that same right hand, then squared his shoulders, once more dropping both hands at his side. There was a short interval of waiting, during which he kept repeating to himself, as though conning some essential lesson:

"Leslie Wilkinson—Leslie Wilkinson, that's the man I want to see."

Suddenly a heavy door was swung open inward and a butler stood before him, bowing.

"Leslie Wilkinson," demanded Ilingsworth somewhat explosively. There was no prefix to the name—Ilingsworth was not considering the conventionalities. He had come fresh from the confidential reports of Wall Street detectives. Those two words had seared themselves into his brain.

The butler looked surprised, shocked, that is, so far as his rigid training would permit.

"Leslie Wilkinson," he repeated doubtfully, as though already hypnotised into the other's trend of thought.

"Leslie Wilkinson," said Ilingsworth, "and right away."

The servant bowed.

"Who shall I say, sir?"

Ilingsworth smiled. It was all too easy, so it seemed. He felt as though the fates were with him, as though before him lay the path to victory. His breath came short and fast as he thought of the possibilities: for if he should succeed, Elinor forever would be safe—could take her rightful place in society.

"There's my card," he said, drawing forth his wallet.

Instantly the butler became obsequious, for not only did he perceive that the visitor bore himself as a gentleman, but he recognised the card as an open-sesame to his master. He handled it with infinite respect. It read:

MR. GILES ILINGSWORTH

Vice-President of the
Tri-State Trust Company,
New York.

"Your pardon, sir," said the butler before he closed the door, and with a nod of the head towards the street. "Your car—does it need attention, sir? Our garage is only half a block away. Shall I send out and tell your chauffeur, sir?"

Ilingsworth's glance followed that of the butler's. A blue limousine stood throbbing at the curb. It had evidently been there all the while, though Ilingsworth had failed to observe it.

"It's not my car," he returned brusquely.

Again a puzzled look came over the servant's face, but concealing his embarrassment, he closed the door.

"Very good, sir," he said. "Kindly step this way."

Ilingsworth followed him down the long hall

to the entrance of a room before which stood another servant.

"Step into the reception-room, sir, if you please," said the butler. But, to the astonishment of both men, the footman advanced and waved them back, saying:

"One moment, please, sir." And oblivious to the fact that Ilingsworth was standing in the middle of the broad hall, he drew the butler to one side, whispered in a confidential, off-duty aside: "You must not take him in there. Put him somewhere else."

"Why not?" asked the butler. "Who's in there?"

The footman became inexcusably mysterious. He looked about him on all sides to see that he was unheard. Then he shaded his mouth with his hand and placed his lips close to the other's ear.

"Her," he whispered.

The butler eyed the footman sharply.

"Her!" he exclaimed. "Who's she?"

"There's only one her," he answered, and pursed his lips as though about to perpetrate an explosion. And then it came: "Miss Braine, of course. Here's her card."

The man who had admitted Giles Ilingsworth stiffened when he looked upon this card, which read:

MISS MADELINE BRAINE

The Llandegraff —— Street and the Drive.

"Not the governor's . . . ?"

"The same."

"What's she doing here?"

For answer the footman merely shrugged his shoulders.

"When did she come?" asked the butler.

"Ten minutes or so ago."

"But I didn't see her come."

"I let her in; you were downstairs."

The butler came as near to a whistle as any butler on duty ever came. What is more, in his agitation at this new and unexpected crisis, he quite forgot the presence of Giles Ilingsworth, vice-president of the largest trust company in the world.

"There'll be the devil to pay if the missus sees her! Did she ask for——"

"She came to see the governor," interrupted the footman, shaking his head; "and what's more, she says she's going to wait until he comes."

The butler knitted his brows.

"You were a fool to let her in! Is that her car outside?"

"Don't you know it when you see it?"

The mention of the car forced the butler's thoughts back to Ilingsworth. He started toward the financier of the Tri-State Company with abundant apology upon his lips.

"I beg your pardon, sir . . ." he began, and then stopped. For as he passed the door of the reception-room he was able to peer into it, and by some servant's trick to sweep every corner of it with his glance. It was a room void of hangings, almost bare in its rich simplicity—one of those triumphs of interior decoration. The butler's face was pale as he retraced his steps and once . . faced his fellow-servant.

"There's not a soul in there—see for y. .self."

The other did see for himself, and he, too, looked bewildered.

"But I put her in there, and I put her there to stay. I didn't leave her for more than half a second. Where's she gone?"

Instantly the butler took charge of the situation, and in commanding sotto voce directed the other to lock in the library, the music-room, the Louis XIV. room, even in the grand salon.

The search was conducted quietly and with decorum, and it is only due to these two past-masters of the art of footmanship to say that this dialogue had taken an almost infinitesimal space of time, that its utterance had been practically inaudible, and that Ilingsworth, the guest to whom these two

had owed a very present duty, had not yet begun to realise that his interests were in any wise neglected.

But the footman came back disgruntled, disturbed, and wailing that she was not to be found. And then it was that the butler stepped once more to the side of Giles Ilingsworth and said somewhat contritely:

"Beg your pardon, sir, but would you mind stepping into 'the Den,'" all the while showing the way. "It's Mr. Wilkinson's favourite place, his private room, sir, for seeing all his friends—business and otherwise, sir—yes, sir."

Ilingsworth followed where the butler led. And then, turning sharply upon him, he repeated:

"I'm waiting to see Leslie Wilkinson. Do you understand?"

"Very good, sir."

Alone in "the Den" Ilingsworth smiled as he looked about him. Fate was surely favouring him. The Den was a quasi-business office and smoking-room, a room where anybody might be interviewed by anybody of the household. It was in this room that Tiffany's man displayed his biggest, newest jewels to Mrs. Peter V.; it was in this room that Mrs. Peter V.'s women friends would drop in evenings for a chat with Peter V. as he smoked a black cigar; it was the comfortable place of the whole, big house. But to Ilings-

worth it was something more: it was the place best fitted for the arena of events as events had shaped themselves. "The Den" had but one window—a high window that ran along one side of the wall just underneath the black-beamed ceiling and just above a long, comfortable, leather seat that ran along the wall. The window was above the head of an ordinary man, and was composed of leaded glass. It gave but little light, and afforded no view at all of the world without. For the rest, there was a big, flat-topped desk, heavy, leather-covered lounging-chairs, and heavy, dark red curtains everywhere about the walls. And but a single door.

"The place I've dreamed about," Ilingsworth thought to himself. For an instant he stood drinking in all of its details in some sort of gleeful ecstasy—the ecstasy of a man who feels the end of the journey near. And then, suddenly, he became all action. He stepped to the desk upon which stood a desk-telephone upon a standard, and a small mahogany tablet with two push-buttons on its surface.

"I can't understand why it's all so easy," he told himself; and the next moment he drew from his left coat-pocket a pair of wire-cutters, and with two sudden, jerky twists of his right wrist he clipped the flexible green-covered wires that connected the push-buttons and the telephone, and

twisted the unconnected ends down and out of sight. It was his first advent in this house of Wilkinson, and yet he had rehearsed the scene in his waking hours and in his sleep so many, many times, that he did it without nervousness and without fear. So that he was not surprised to find himself more than practise-perfect. He glanced about the room for evidences of other wires, buttons, bells and speaking tubes, and then swooped down upon the door.

"If only it has a key!" he thought; and the next moment he almost cried out joyfully, for he found that it had not only a key, but that it might be bolted from the inside.

"And when it's bolted," he assured himself, "what sound can penetrate beyond its walls?"

Beyond its walls! The phrase, somehow, kept ringing in his ears; to him there was music in it. He never thought of the walls themselves; nor had he ever asked himself whether behind those rich and heavy hanging curtains there might not be other means of exit.

He took his place behind the open door.

"Now for the crisis," he said calmly to himself.

And plunging his hand once more into his coat-pocket he produced a gun—a modern, hammerless revolver that he had selected with considerable care, after consulting the advertisements

in the magazines, and after reading the booklets of their makers. This gun he had selected, not only on account of its particular efficiency, but also because of its remarkably repulsive look. It bore the same formidable appearance compared with the large family of fire-arms as the bull-dog does to his canine race. It was a weapon of peculiarly terrifying appearance—and that was what he wanted. For the rest, it was a .32 calibre, and upon its handle it bore the maker's name and a number—a number that belonged to this particular weapon and to no other weapon of this make in the whole wide world.

Suddenly the sound of footsteps in the hall without reached his ears. Every nerve tingled with his purpose; every muscle became rigid and alert.

"Now!" he exclaimed.

" . . . . Wilkinson," said the voice.

It was a mumbled announcement of some sort which came from the butler. Ilingsworth waited until he had retreated, and only when he was certain that but one figure had entered the room, was looking about in wonder at its apparent emptiness, did he slowly, swiftly close the door, lock it, bolt it, and finally place his back against it. Then, levelling the weapon, he extended it toward the person who had entered.

"Seat yourself at that desk," he commanded,

a dangerous note in his voice; "and don't make any outcry, or I'll——"

He stopped short and lowered his weapon.

"Why—I——" he stammered, growing red-faced as he spoke.

It was a mere wisp of a girl who confronted him—a girl full-throated and full-bosomed, and upon whom the gods had conferred that dazzling of all dazzling charms: light hair and dark brown eyes. Fascinating she was even to Ilingsworth, bewildering, too, as she gazed upon him in sudden fear, her eyes widening, her lips parted.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered, consternation making it difficult for him to speak. "I was expecting quite another person—Leslie Wilkinson."

Too frightened to reply the girl merely stood and gazed at him. For a moment she remained thus, and then, with the shudder of one who shakes from her some horrible nightmare, she found her voice and said:

"Why, I'm Miss Wilkinson—Leslie Wilkinson!"

Ilingsworth could hardly believe his ears.

"You—you are Leslie Wilkinson!" he broke out. "Surely there must be some mistake. Leslie is a man's name, isn't it?"

The girl struggled to regain her composure. Dumbfounded and confused though he was,

It was a mere wisp of a girl who confronted him

Ilingsworth saw this, and with a hasty movement thrust the revolver behind his back. And still facing her, he retreated to a small table at the far corner of the room, and leaned against it, thus concealing the weapon. In a measure this action of his reassured the girl. Her countenance broke into a tremulous smile, though her breast rose and fell tumultuously and her breath came in gasps.

"Yes," she replied in an endeavour to gain time, "Leslie is a man's name except when it happens to be a girl's name, too. My name is Leslie—I'm a girl—you see."

But again terror seized her. The man before her was undoubtedly insane, she thought, and she glanced widely about the room for some avenue of escape. There was only the door, and like some startled, wild thing, she broke into a run toward it. But half way across the room she halted, throwing over her shoulder a glance of fear toward Ilingsworth, and then slowly retreated to her position at the desk.

"Please don't shoot!" she pleaded. "I promise you I won't try to get away!"

Slowly, cautiously, Ilingsworth stretched forth his left hand. It was evident that he did not wish to frighten the girl.

"Don't be afraid," he assured her, and so quietly and courteously now that it seemed to the girl as if another man was speaking. "I'm not

going to shoot—I shall stay right where I am, don't fear. If you wish you may go now." But as she started to go he leaned forward and said: "You're free to go,"—there was a pathetic note in his voice now,—"but I would like to tell you something—to explain my presence here. I came here looking for Leslie Wilkinson—the son of Peter V. Wilkinson, and——"

"But," she interrupted, in a puzzled way, "but my father has no son—I'm his only child."

Ilingsworth bowed his head.

"I know that now," he answered, "but I didn't know it before. I was looking for a conspirator of Peter V. Wilkinson's, and I thought I had run him down. I thought I had, indeed. . . . You must not be frightened," he went on hastily, "and don't think me crazy. I'm only horribly nervous. I've been desperate for weeks. I wouldn't harm you for the world—I have a daughter of my own. But you must hear me out—I've got to tell this to somebody—somebody who believes me, or I'll go mad. No, no," he pleaded, for she seemed about to leave him. "My name is—why, here's my card—I'm——"

"Oh, to be sure, Mr. Giles Ilingsworth, Vice-President of the Tri-State," she said smilingly, giving a hasty look at the card in his hand. "I remember, now, a quarter of an hour ago I wondered what you might want with me. You

see I dressed all up for you," and she flashed a glance of coquetry toward him that was meant to captivate and appease, for she was still under the impression that she was dealing with an insane man: not for one moment did she believe that the Vice-President of the Tri-State stood before her.

Ilingsworth turned pale as he watched her. Although apparently indifferent to her words, her marvellous self-possession and witchery were by no means lost on him. With something of a pang he realised that it was easily explainable. She was Wilkinson's daughter; she had her share of his wonderful steadiness of nerve. He sighed. How many times had he given thanks that Elinor was all woman, all heart, gentle, yielding. And yet, how much better for her if she had some of the qualities that Wilkinson seemed to have infused into his offspring. Little did he know that Elinor was fashioned in his own mould; that the dark-eyed, warm-faced girl that he had left at home had inherited his impulsiveness, for he had been denied the even balance accorded to other business men. Compared with the caressing tenderness of his girl Elinor, this girl who faced him seemed, perhaps, too well-balanced. But though he did not know it, he was mistaken: Leslie Wilkinson, though of a different type, was fully as feminine.

"Elinor," he groaned half to himself.

"Mr. Ilingsworth," Leslie began, breaking in on his musings, "may I ask what you want with Leslie Wilkinson?"

Her question roused him. The blood forced itself into his temples until the veins stood out like whipcords on his skull; desperation furrowed his brow and lined his face.

"I want nothing of Leslie Wilkinson except my own," he answered sullenly. "There's a quarter of a million dollars that belongs to me—a quarter of a million dollars—every dollar that I've got in this world—every dollar that I ever had."

"But," protested the girl, "I haven't your money."

Ilingsworth raised his eyebrows. It was plain that he doubted her, though she spoke with every indication of honesty and frankness.

"You haven't any money, any stocks, bonds, deeds, or anything of the kind?"

"I have what my mother left me," was her quiet answer. "She died some time ago."

"How much was it?" he persisted.

"Why do you ask?" she returned, annoyed.

Ilingsworth made a gesture of impatience and again he asked:

"How much was it?"

"Less—than a million," the girl faltered.

"About three quarters, I should say. I have the figures somewheres—but what is it to you?"

The man brushed away her answer as though the three quarters of a million were a mere dross.

"Tell me the truth!" he cried. "For heaven's sake don't lie to me! I'm a broken man! You've got fifty million dollars, possibly a hundred million standing in your name. What do you suppose I've spent my last few thousands for but to get information that was reliable and positive. I know Peter V. Wilkinson—and I'm the only one, I'll wager, who knows the truth. Next week, next year, the world will say that Wilkinson is bankrupt—without a dollar in the world. But I know—I've found out. There is noc another man in the world who could do the thing he's done—strip a million people of their savings and hide it so successfully. That's Wlikinson! Now whom could he trust—but you? You've got it all!"

The girl was pale, but there was a new light in her eyes. She began to perceive that the man who confronted her was not a mere overwrought specimen of mankind. However much he might be mistaken this time, he was talking with the force of business habit.

"You know as well as I, Mr. Ilingsworth, that I can't very well discuss these matters with you," she said frankly. "My father is ruined—I don't believe he will come out of this with a dollar.

Who is responsible for his ruin, I do not know." Little wrinkles creased her forehead; she stopped uncertain how to continue. "It's the panic, I suppose," she went on presently, "and he's gone down under it like other Wall Street men. Only the blow—he suffered, perhaps, more than the others."

Ilingsworth's lip curled.

"I know," he began emphatically, "I know that Peter V. Wilkinson is still worth from fifty to a hundred million dollars—money sucked like life-blood from the populace. I know that and more—his entire fortune stands, in a manner and by a method that no one ever will suspect, in your name. Your name, of course—whom else could he trust? Surely not his second wife, with all that money? You know that well enough."

"Mr. Ilingsworth, I——"

"And because you had these millions," went on Ilingsworth hurriedly, excitedly, "among them my quarter of a million, not mine, but Elinor's, —do you know what that means to her?"

Leslie was strangely affected. She felt her consciousness vacillating between a sense of danger and a sense of pity. Surreptitiously, during the first part of the interview, she had pressed the button for assistance, and had discovered, later, the disconnection of the wires. Just what to do she did not know. Above all, she realised that

she must propitiate this man—this man with the grievance, real or fancied, whose statements, if true, gave her the desire to hear more; if untrue, rendered him all the more a man of danger. Impulsively she held out her hand, and said softly:

"Do tell me about your daughter—Elinor—Mr. Ilingsworth."

Immediately Illingsworth dropped his air of aggressiveness. He advanced slowly toward her, his right hand still in his coat-pocket, but, as he approached her, he drew forth that hand, and with it, a small photograph.

"That's Elinor,"—he said, his face lighting up wonderfully,—"as she was about a year ago—about the time I met your father. If I had known that you existed, I should have wished that she could know you."

Leslie took the picture from his hand and looked long and intently at it. To her surprise she saw that this was no ordinary face. The girl was evidently petite, with an expression on her face that seemed to ask for the world's fond protection as well as its admiration; a girl with her soul in her eyes, at any rate, so it seemed to Leslie.

"Oh, she's pretty!" she exclaimed. "But someone must always take care of her—always, always."

"You've said it, though I never even thought

it!" he cried. "And you, a stranger, see it—that appeal for protection, that wistfulness, that——" Abruptly he stopped and glanced quickly toward the heavy hangings on the wall toward the right—a strange, startled glance it was.

Leslie followed the direction of his gaze wonderingly.

"I had a feeling, somehow," he said, fastening his steely grey eyes suspiciously on her, "that we were not alone."

And indeed Ilingsworth would have been all the more startled had he known that his fancy embodied the truth. For behind the dull red curtains breathed a mortal who had heard, had seen, everything.

II

HOWEVER successful Ilingsworth believed he had been in his effort to persuade himself that his intuitive faculties had been at fault, when they warned him of some alien presence in the room, it must be acknowledged that he continued to look a little tentatively. At length, however, his uneasiness wore off, and his manner, while again holding out the picture for Leslie to look upon, softened so perceptibly that it would have given one the impression that his visit there was more in the nature of a social call than the tempestuous errand of business vengeance that it was.

"I wish you had known her," Ilingsworth said; "and I'm rather surprised that you don't. We're Morristown people, you know, and Elinor, well, Elinor's friends are all very nice people. Even in New York, she——"

Leslie's eyes sought the ground.

"We go out very little here," she said. "Of course I have my friends, and there was a time. . . . But since my father married a second time, why——" This girlish confidence trailed off into uncertainty. She handed back the photograph. "But I should like to know her," she declared with sincerity.

"I wish you did," he began, and then added, "even in the light of present things, I wish you did."

In the silence that followed Leslie fell to wondering about the man before her, and it did not take her long to decide that she liked him. He was not, it is true, of the same shrewd, practical mould as her father. But she recognised that he had the high-strung temperament, so often a characteristic of the aristocrat. The sense of fear was fast leaving her.

"I—I'm going to apologise," he began at length, "for the fright I've given you, though my purpose hasn't flagged. And if I had a man to deal with—if I had met Peter V. Wilkinson, face to face again, who knows but the demon in me would come once more to the fore. You say you can't understand. Let me explain to you how it was: Up to thirteen months ago we, Elinor and I, had a quarter of a million dollars—that means nearly fifteen thousand dollars a year. And fifteen thousand in Morristown means decent living—even here in New York it would mean that. Then I met Wilkinson." His face grew livid, his hand clenched. "May heaven forgive me, why didn't I understand it was my quarter of a million that this vampire——"

The girl drew herself up and quickly interrupted him.

"Mr. Ilingsworth, I must remind you that you are speaking of my father."

There was no mistaking her anger. Her eyes blazed, and it seemed to rouse the tiger in him.

"Yes, I'm speaking of your father!" he cried. "And if you've never heard the truth before, you will hear it now. Moreover, if I am any judge of human nature, you'll know whether I am stating facts or otherwise. Thirteen months ago Peter V. Wilkinson sought me out. I thought I was seeking him,"—he laughed bitterly,—"but I was wrong. He sought me out and placed me high up in his companies. I was successful—which meant that he had succeeded in his scheme. I did not see it then; but now I know that the man who is willing to stoop low enough to rope in the pennies of the Bridgets, the Michaels, the Lenas, and the Gustaves, of this world, is a man who would spend his time and money to get my quarter of a million—mine and Elinor's—in his grasp. But then I was flattered. It meant big salary and big dividends for me, at least, so I was assured."

He faltered for an instant, and then went on:

"I was a fool—a fool, not to see it all before. The result is that now I haven't got a dollar—we're penniless."

"My father," returned the girl, calmly enough, "will have less than that, when all is

said and done. This house, though it's in the name of Mrs. Wilkinson, will have to be sold, I presume. I don't see why you make a fuss over it—it was the panic, wasn't it? Everybody went down before it. That is, a great many Wall Street men are bankrupt. So, why do you complain?"

"I complain because your father has got my quarter of a million—either he's got it, or you have."

"I told you before that I have none of my father's money. I have my mother's money only—less than a million, that's all."

"The panic!" went on Ilingsworth bitterly, ignoring her protest. "Yes, that's just like Wilkinson to lay it to the panic! That's what they all do! I tell you the panic was not the cause; it was the excuse. I wonder if you have ever stopped to realise what a trust company is for?"

"Why, to save people's money, of course," was the girl's ready answer. "Just like a bank, isn't it?"

Ilingsworth almost snorted. It was a strange colloquy, this conversation between the man of middle age and the girl. It had a curious interest that neither could have defined. The girl, on her part, felt that Ilingsworth represented, somehow, the criticism and abuse that the world was heaping on Peter V. Wilkinson. She wanted

to estimate its full force, to weigh its import, and then to defend her father with every fibre of her being; Ilingsworth, on the other hand, felt the need of a confidant who would understand, for Elinor of the wistful eyes could only sympathise. This young woman knew what he was talking about.

"Miss Wilkinson," he burst out now, "you surprise me! I thought you were more of a business woman than I am a business man. But I find you're not. Let me explain it to you. Jones wants to run a factory; Smith wants to speculate in real estate; Robinson wants to buck the Wall Street game. Now they haven't got a dollar, so what do they do? They buy a trust company."

The girl opened her eyes wide.

"That's nonsense!" she exclaimed. "How can anyone buy a trust company without a dollar!"

Ilingsworth's smile was full of meaning.

"It's the kind of nonsense your own father has been dealing in for years," he returned, placing his hand upon her arm. "They buy the trust company, and put up its own stock as security for the purchase price—then they go ahead. Jones runs his factory; Smith buys and sells real estate; Robinson bucks the game upon the Street . . . ."

"And without money?" reiterated the girl, still incredulous.

"*With money,*" corrected Ilingsworth, his voice even and unexcited now, "with the money of Mike and Bridget and Carl and Sophy, depositors who put their hard-earned dollars in to get a few cents interest—two per cent., to be exact—while Jones and his crowd are making two hundred per cent. on the money. But Jones isn't through—he wants more. So he and his crowd buy another trust company, put up the stock of the first as collateral, or any way you please, —there's no end to the game,—and this crowd go on with their speculation, using the people's money, and gathering in the cream. They never stop; and just so long as everything is prosperous, so long are the trust companies sound. Then, in the fulness of time, comes the panic,"—and with his clenched hands he smote the top of the desk,—"smash!"

The girl showed that she had been following him closely when she maintained:

"Still, that's only your point of view. At any rate, it was a venture, and when the panic came —everybody goes under. These people don't create the panic."

Ilingsworth gritted his teeth.

"I haven't finished!" he cried. "Out of all this crowd of Jones, Smith and Robinson, there is

always one man who understands the game. He owns seventeen trust companies; he's milked them dry. He's been *waiting* for a panic; the panic comes. Now he throws up his hands, tells the people he's been a fool with the rest, and shows up worthless stock—waste-paper by the ton that he has bought for just nothing a pound. But he's got *all* that the people haven't got, and he's salted it away. And that man's name is Peter V. Wilkinson."

Leslie's face paled.

"Mr. Ilingsworth," she cried sharply, "do you really believe all that you've been telling me?"

Ilingsworth stared her wearily in the face.

"The Norahs and the Ludwigs, perhaps, don't mind losing their few dollars," he replied vaguely; "but I want to tell you that when I—when Elinor and I lose fifteen thousand a year—and how many years there are ahead of us—it's killing! Killing! And you ask do I believe all that I've been telling you?" He roused himself to sudden energy. "Believe? Why, heavens and earth, I know, I know. . . ."

There was a pause in which Ilingsworth's eyes sought the floor. Presently he looked up and held out his hand.

"Miss Wilkinson," he said contritely, "for what I've done, or tried to do this afternoon, I

suppose you could have me put in jail—in an asylum. If I had only myself to think of, I shouldn't mind. However, I beg you to keep it to yourself, if you feel you can. I see things clearer now. . . ."

Leslie took the offered hand.

"But you weren't going to shoot Leslie Wilkinson, if he'd been a man?"

Ilingsworth shook his head.

"To tell the truth, Miss Wilkinson, I wasn't. My intention was to frighten him. . . ."

"You succeeded admirably," she answered, with a frank laugh. Then she added: "What were you going to frighten him into doing?"

Ilingsworth's hand strayed to his forehead.

"I was going to compel him to sign a check, turn over stock, restore to me my quarter of a million, somehow."

The girl smiled as she asked:

"But how could he do it in this room? Surely you didn't expect him to have any stocks or money here? And if he gave a check, you know payment on it could be stopped the instant you had left. And, anyway, how could you get out unscathed? I can't just see how you could. . . ."

Ilingsworth stared at her, fascinated. He felt his vision clear. He realised now that she was right; that for weeks he had suffered the curse of the desperate; that he had been robbed of the one

thing that the desperate man needs—deliberation. He had possessed purpose, force—the purpose to force the issue at the point of a murderous revolver, but when it came to the execution. . . . And what about the result? To what end would it all tend? Until now he had never thought of that.

"I believe you're right, after all," he said somewhat sheepishly, and started toward the door. "May I ask you for your promise not to expose me," he entreated, "for the sake of Elinor?"

Leslie bowed her head. Now that it was all over, she was on the verge of hysteria. "Mr. Ilingsworth, I won't say a word about it," she promised, "unless the time comes when I think it necessary. . . . This panic seems to have made us all half crazy—even my father seems so most of the time. Good-bye!"

Somewhat incoherently Ilingsworth murmured some grateful words, and immediately after Leslie watched him silently and carefully unlock the door and open it. The hall was deserted save for the presence of a footman near the front entrance, and to him this long interview behind closed doors was as nothing. These were parlous times, in the house of Wilkinson; strange goings and comings were the rule, not the exception. Nothing was unusual. And so Ilingsworth passed

out in safety, carrying his purpose with him to the free air outside.

But no sooner had he reached the middle of the sidewalk than there swooped down upon him a horde of vagabonds, infinitesimal specimens of humanity, and this mob of street gamins had but a single purpose, sang but a common song:

TRI-STATE TRUST COMPANY CLOSES ITS DOORS.
BIGGEST SMASH ON RECORD.

For weeks and months, perhaps, Ilingsworth had seen this coming, had known that it was inevitable, and here it was, thrust into his face in scare headlines that smelt to heaven! It smote him as with sudden lightning shock. But the public announcement did more than shock him, it turned him almost into a raving maniac. For an instant he stood silent, regarding the clamorous morsels of humanity all about him, clamorous for the smallest coin known to the Union. Then, with mighty swings of his arms, he swooped upon them, shrieking:

"Get out of my sight, get out of my sight, you ragamuffins!"

The newsboys fled as far as the next corner. There they stopped, clustered once again and jeered at him.

Turning, Ilingsworth again faced the house of Wilkinson.

"I'm tricked—tricked!" he cried. "Why did I give up so easy; why didn't I force the girl. . . ." For a moment he checked his half-frenzied words, then he went on: "Peter V. Wilkinson, I'll even up with you, somehow, yet!"

In a few moments he had turned the nearest corner and disappeared.

Back in the Wilkinson household, Leslie, almost exhausted, sank into a chair. As she sat there, she perceived one of the footmen passing her, bound from the rear to the outer entrance.

"Jeffries," cried the girl, springing up, "tell Jordan that it will be quite unnecessary to mention Mr. Ilingsworth's call to anyone. He came to see me."

"Very good, ma'am," returned the footman, passing on.

"And Jeffries," she continued, "have you anything to do just now?"

"Nothing, Miss Leslie," answered the man, "except to obtain the latest extras for Mrs. Wilkinson. She's that particular about it."

"Are there any extras now?" inquired the girl.

The footman inclined his head toward the entrance to the house, through which Ilingsworth had just made his exit.

"Don't you hear them, Miss?" he asked.

And indeed, at that moment, the yelping of the young street wolves of Manhattan could plainly be heard. Leslie placed her hands over her ears and fled incontinently up the broad stairs, disdaining the services of the man at the lift, who rose expectantly as she started past him. On reaching the first landing, she met Roy Pallister—little Pallister, she always thought of him, and noting the consternation on his countenance, she could not refrain from bursting into laughter.

"Why, Mr. Pallister," she cried, "you look as if you had been shot out of a cannon!"

In a moment Pallister's look of worriment changed to one of temporary happiness. He was an undersized little fellow, doing the duties of his insignificant career with a gentle manner. He was her father's household secretary, amanuensis, a paid servant, it is true; but critics of the Wilkinson household always maintained two things: first, that there was only one gentlewoman there—Leslie; and only one gentleman—Pallister. Leslie liked him, yet she could not eradicate from the humorous part of her nature the fact that Pallister was ever like a shuttlecock, dancing his dignified but harried attendance now upon Peter V. and then upon another member of the household, whose demands were even more exacting.

"Have you been shot out of a cannon, Mr. Pallister?" she persisted.

Pallister turned his eyes away from hers: he didn't dare to look at Leslie too long. To him she was just a bit too bewildering. After a time his glance crept back to hers.

"Yes, Miss Wilkinson," he said nervously, "and what's more, I've got to come back directly and face the cannon's mouth again."

Leslie touched him lightly on the shoulder; a thrill passed through the young man's frame.

"Never mind," she said smilingly, "I'm going up to spike the cannon for you."

On reaching the second floor she knocked gently, but persistently, at a boudoir door.

"Oh, who is it now?" came in a petulant, nasal voice from within. "Come in, if you're coming; otherwise stay out!" And an expression of something like pain crossed the girl's face as she entered.

Sitting up in bed in a flowered-silk kimona, a lady was sipping a claret cup. Year after year, like the Wilkinson mansion, the lineaments and form of this lady had been portrayed in the press throughout the country; and long after she was entitled to any claim to comeliness, she had been heralded as one of the beauties of the universe. As a matter of fact, her delicate form—if delicate form she had ever possessed—had been wholly obliterated by a generous layer of avoirdupois—lumps wherever the lumps were the least needed.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" she snapped.

Leslie groaned inwardly as she looked at the woman before her; for this lady of leisure was the Maggie Lane mentioned by the megaphone—Margaret Lane Wilkinson now, but still Maggie by nature—and her step-mother! The girl's eyes moistened as she thought of her own mother that she had known, and who had died a short time ago. For in the case of Wilkinson the funeral baked meats had almost furnished the marriage feast.

"Anything I can do?" asked the young girl, forcing up the pleasant little smile that was always part and parcel of Leslie Wilkinson.

The lady of the flowered kimona did not respond at once, but kept her eyes fastened on the door.

"I told Jeffries to get those extras right away—he's been gone an hour," she complained.

Leslie could not suppress a smile when she saw the multitude of papers that bestrewed the bed and floor, and before she could speak, the elder woman went on, between sips of her claret cup, to say:

"Oh, the disgrace of these failures! The terrible charges that are made! I simply cannot stand it! A mere girl, like you, cannot appreciate the strain of this thing on my nerves. And

everybody thinks of nothing but the strain on Peter; no one considers poor me——"

"Oh, but you must not take it so to heart," said the girl with well-feigned sympathy. "Everybody is failing now."

"But I have looked these papers through and through," Mrs. Peter V. went on, "and nowhere, nowhere have I been considered at all. Why, not one paper has even mentioned my name to-day. For a month not one of them has published a picture of me; yet they are full of pictures of Peter V., this house, and of the Tri-State Trust Company offices. It makes me sick—nobody thinks of me."

At this moment the footman knocked at the door. Leslie stepped forward and took the papers that he passed in, tossing them lightly on the bed.

"Oh! Oh!" wailed Mrs. Peter V. as her eye rested on the headlines. "The Tri-State has gone up! This is the end—the end of everything! Here, Leslie, you take this paper, and I'll take that—we'll see whether there isn't something in them about me."

On the floor below, no sooner had Leslie left the Den than there was a rustle behind the heavy curtains, in that room, and presently they were

parted, and then, with a stealthy movement a woman stepped forth into the middle of the room.

Madeline Braine looked carefully about her, listened for an instant, and then advanced still further toward the door. Her attitude was watchfulness itself.

"His daughter Elinor, a girl who needs protection!" she cried, with an agitation born of fresh events, and then a half-sob broke from her lips. "There are other girls who should have had care just as much—and haven't had it."

She glanced at her watch and started forward once again.

"I can't wait!" she cried. "Why isn't Peter Wilkinson here?"

For a moment it occurred to her to cross the hall to the reception-room, and from there to summon a servant and give him a message. She had had her own reasons, in the first instance, for darting into Wilkinson's Den to hide. She well knew that her agreement with Wilkinson forbade her to cross his threshold; but she intended to make a crisis in her affairs as an excuse to him, and quite naturally decided that there would be much less danger in the Den of her being discovered by others than in the reception-room. Now, there were reasons why she must not be found within this room: the interview between Illingsworth and Leslie Wilkinson made it impossible.

And she started to leave, but suddenly drew back.

"Somebody's coming," she whispered to herself. And scarcely had she retreated once more behind the concealing curtains of the Den when Jeffries entered with an armful of the latest extras and laid them down upon the desk. After that, he passed out, but events happened with such unusual rapidity that Madeline Braine found herself again caught like a rat in a trap behind the heavy curtains in the room.

"It's just as well," she assured herself, as she waited there, every minute expecting to get a chance to escape; but as it turned out, it was not just as well for her.

Alone at last in the silence and solitude of her own apartments at the top of the house, Leslie sat for some moments on the window-seat, gazing out over the Hudson at the misty, dusky shore across the way.

"I wonder," she mused, "if what this man Ilingsworth says is true. Is it possible that my father——" she stopped abruptly. "No, no, it can't be true," she went on; "my father wouldn't . . . ." But the face of Giles Ilingsworth rose before her, and she found herself searching his open, honest countenance for some loophole of escape. Now his words rang in her

ears, and she felt that they were the words of a man who knew. . . .

"Oh," she cried, "I must find out who is right, and who is wrong! I must know about my father, and what he has done!" Presently, she leaped to her feet, crossed to her dressing-table and picked up the photograph of a man—a young man with a square chin and wonderful eyes—so she thought—that looked her squarely in the face.

"Eliot," she said softly, to the picture, "you're always honest with me, are you not? You're honest with everybody. I wonder if you will find out for me—the truth about my father."

Now she drew the photograph nearer to her, and her eyes grew soft and tender, and, for the time being, she forgot Ilingsworth and his daughter Elinor; forgot the Tri-State Trust Company and its alleged iniquities; forgot even her father, Peter V. Wilkinson.

"Eliot, dear," she whispered, "I wonder what you would think of me, if you knew that I did this?" Whereupon, she pressed her soft, warm, young face against the pictured one. "Maybe you'll never know, though," she went on; "maybe you'll never take the trouble to find out."

Leslie laid down the photograph with a sigh, and, retracing her steps to the window, was just in time to see a big Mastodon bring up at the curb in the street below, from which four men

alighted: Peter V. Wilkinson, her father, looking very much exercised and troubled; Flomerfelt, his confidential man; and, lastly, two Pinkerton detectives, recently-acquired guards who were never far away whenever he appeared in the open.

III

"WHAT the deuce is that machine doing in front of my place?" were the words that Peter V. Wilkinson spoke as his eyes lighted upon the dark blue limousine that had been standing for so long a time before his house.

"Whose machine is it?" answered Flomerfelt, who had not yet recognised it. But a moment more he emitted a whistle and whispered softly under his breath: "By George, it's hers!"

Wilkinson's eyes bulged with anger.

"What does she mean by coming here?" He clutched Flomerfelt's shoulder as in a vise. "You don't suppose she's come to see my wife, do you? What's she up to? Why, I wouldn't have even little Pallister see her for the world! And as for Leslie! Thunder and lightning, if Leslie finds this out—anything but that!"

Wilkinson started toward the blue machine, bent on interviewing the chauffeur.

"Look here, my man——" he began; but whatever imprecations he intended to hurl at the chauffeur's head never passed his lips, for then it was that something happened: a strange, dishevelled figure dashed suddenly into the group, threw itself upon Wilkinson and seized him by the

throat. With almost maniacal energy the assailant forced Wilkinson up against the blue machine, and digging his fingers into that gentleman's windpipe, he cried:

"Now, Wilkinson, I'm going to even up matters with you!"

Wilkinson's face turned blue—almost as blue as the machine—and his eyes bulged out almost like the headlights in front of it.

"Help! Help!" implored Wilkinson, tugging at the wrists of iron that held him.

His call was quickly answered. And in an incredibly short space of time, the Pinkerton men had broken the madman's grip and held him fast. Wilkinson quickly regained his composure. Then half-wondering, half-fearful, he riveted his eyes upon this enemy who seemed to have dropped from the skies, while Flomerfelt came out from behind the touring car where he had warily awaited the outcome of the sudden onslaught.

"So it has come to this! Why, Ilingsworth, what's the matter with you?" ejaculated Wilkinson. "What have I done to you?"

But before Ilingsworth could answer, the Pinkerton men had hustled him into the Mastodon, and were holding him there.

"Shall we surrender him, Mr. Wilkinson?" they asked.

Wilkinson glanced at Flomerfelt, presumably,

for advice. But when the other was about to speak, Wilkinson evidently changed his mind, for waving him aside with his hand, he strode to the side of the Mastodon and looking Ilingsworth full in the face, after a moment's hesitation, said:

"Not yet; I don't want the authorities to have him yet. I may want to talk to him first. Suppose you bring him into the house." And with that, he turned on his heel, and, striding through the entrance to his home, past his two footmen who were quaking in their boots, walked into the arms of his daughter.

"What's the matter, father?" she cried.

Wilkinson brushed her aside, for the business of the moment was too weighty.

"Flomerfelt," he directed, in a low voice, "tell them to take Ilingsworth into a reception-room—that one there, and hold him until I send for him."

Leslie took her father's arm and led him into the room. With almost a mother's anxious gaze she looked him over.

"Are you hurt?" she inquired. "I saw—I could just make out something—somebody attacking—it was all so quick—but I heard your voice, and then I ran downstairs. But you're safe—safe!" and she patted his arm affectionately. "Oh, what was the trouble?"

Wilkinson sank down into his desk-chair.

"Let me pull myself together first," he said.

His heavy form sprawled itself across the seat, and he panted with the unwonted fright he had had. Now he lit a black cigar.

"Confound it, Leslie!" he returned at length, "the man scared me—blamed if he didn't. There was murder in his eyes."

Leslie had not seen Ilingsworth, neither did she know that he was a prisoner in another room.

"Whose eyes?" she asked, eagerly. "What man?"

Wilkinson turned his glance full upon her.

"A man you never heard of, girlie—a man you never saw—a business man, Giles Ilingsworth——"

He got no further, for she was at his side now, her hand upon his arm.

"Then he *did* mean murder! He did, I know he did!" she exclaimed, greatly excited.

Wilkinson had been wiping his brow; this operation ceased with a start and he searched her face.

"How do you know he did, girlie?" he asked suspiciously.

At that instant the lean and cat-like Flomerfelt entered the room and stood beside the girl. Immediately, with a feminine aversion written on her face, Leslie withdrew and stood in the doorway, still trembling and afraid.

"How do you know that he meant murder?" persisted Wilkinson.

"I'll come back later, father, and tell you why," she said, leaving the room, and hastening toward the staircase.

Flomerfelt moved slowly in the direction of the door and watched her go, then noiselessly retraced his steps, and seated himself opposite the financier. There was no cringing in the manner of this confidential man of Wilkinson's; on the contrary, his attitude toward his employer was that of man to man.

"The only decent thing about you, Peter V.," he said impudently to the multimillionaire, "is your daughter Leslie."

Wilkinson's face plainly showed his annoyance, nevertheless he said:

"Flomerfelt, it would be well for you to leave my daughter Leslie out of this—out of everything, you understand?"

Flomerfelt smiled.

"Leaving her out, then, I will revise my former statement. There are two good things about you: one is Flomerfelt, your very necessary confidant; the other is——" he started to say "your chiefest luxury, Miss Madeline Braine,"—but he didn't say it; for Wilkinson brought his clenched hand down upon the desk with great force.

"Come, get down to the business in hand! Re-

member that you are dealing with Peter V. Wilkinson." He paused, and then added with a smile full of meaning: "Despite his being a ruined bank president."

Flomerfelt shook off his air of sinister sarcasm, squared his elbows on the desk, and was all attention.

"Now, then," continued Wilkinson, "what are we going to do with—with this incubus Ilingsworth?"

"Jug him, Peter! The man is dangerous—he's a bad one."

Wilkinson puffed away at his black cigar. This was a problem and he liked problems. Ilingsworth was in his power, and Wilkinson did not intend to let his chance slip by. Just then his eyes chanced to light on the scareheads of the extras on his desk:

TRI-STATE TRUST COMPANY CLOSES ITS DOORS

But the magnate felt no sensation on reading them. That very afternoon, for that matter, he had seen thousands of them on the streets; and so, they moved him not at all. Nevertheless, he tossed one to Flomerfelt.

"Pretty serious predicament, eh, Flomerfelt?" he said easily.

Coolly, Flomerfelt rose, reached over for a cigar and lighted it.

"There are only two men in this city who can handle a situation of that kind," he answered significantly.

Wilkinson merely raised his eyebrows.

"And these two," Flomerfelt continued, "have got to work together. If they don't——" His eye caught the other's glance and held it. "If they don't, chief, the devil take the hindmost."

Peter V. Wilkinson laughed until he was red in the face.

"You blamed upstart!" he burst out. "Do you think that Peter V. Wilkinson isn't able to go it alone?"

"I know he isn't," emphatically.

Wilkinson sprang to his feet.

"Why, you infernal idiot!" he shouted. "Who conceived the scheme of transferring fifty millions of securities of my own to those broken capitalists, Ellenbogen, Glackner & Gilroy, and of taking over a hundred millions of wild-cat stocks! Who thought of having the stock—the good stock, on the books, transferred to the names of these three men, and then having them pass it over to an unknown holder—Leslie Wilkinson! And who thought of sending these three men to different parts of Europe, where they can't be found! Let those who will, ask questions of me—you know what answer they'll get! Let them ask questions of me!" he went on, swelling in the

pride of generalship. "My records show that I'm ruined. Let them ask questions of Leslie Wilkinson—who's got the stuff, and who doesn't know she's got it—what will they find out? Who else is there to ask? Three inaccessible old fools who'll stay where we put 'em until it all blows over. Who conceived that scheme? And who framed another that disposed of thirty-five more millions? Tell me that, eh? Was it you?"

Flomerfelt's smile was a sneer. In turn, he rose and looked his chief full in the face, his own small, ferret eyes alight with contempt.

"It may have taken a good man to conceive the scheme, but it took a better man to put these things into execution, to——"

Wilkinson laughed.

"To do the dirty work," he interposed, contemptuously.

Flomerfelt nodded.

"Have it that way if you will, chief," he assented. "It's dirty work any way you may put it. However, don't you forget one thing, it was I that did it—and doing it, I did what no one else could do."

For a brief interval the two men stood glaring at each other. It was Flomerfelt who, at the last, lowered his eyes.

"Well, have it so, Flomerfelt," Wilkinson was speaking now, "we won't quarrel. Perhaps we

do belong together—at any rate, you get pay enough. . . ."

"No, not enough," Flomerfelt mused half-aloud, for his thoughts had travelled through the closed door, into the hall without, had climbed up the stairs and were centred on Leslie Wilkinson in the room above.

Wilkinson resumed his seat.

"What are we going to do with Ilingsworth," he began. "That's the first proposition. You say to——"

"Jug him," finished Flomerfelt. "Take the offensive. Make the first move."

Wilkinson snorted.

"That's where your 'prentice hand shows up, just as I knew it would. I'm going to let him go."

Flomerfelt started.

"What!" he ejaculated.

Wilkinson grinned. Slowly he gathered together the newspapers littering his desk and deposited them in the waste-basket. Then he turned to Flomerfelt.

"Now, you whippersnapper of an understudy," he paused a moment, "the reason I'm going to let him go, *is because I'm going to lay the blame of this whole thing on Giles Ilingsworth.* See?"

Flomerfelt looked at the extras, at his chief, at the walls, the hangings—now still as death they were—and at the floor. Then he rose and paced

the floor with that noiseless tread of his. Finally he stopped, and swinging his lithe body about, once more faced his chief.

"By George, Wilkinson, you're great!" he exclaimed. "Ilingsworth a scapegoat! How did you ever think of it?"

"*When* did I think of it would be more to the purpose," returned his chief, not without pride. "I thought of it as I think of everything—in a flash—while you were trying to induce me to surrender him. Somebody's got to bear the brunt of this—he's the new blood that's wrecked us—he and his crowd, so why not he, eh? Why not?"

Flomerfelt's thin lips widened into a diabolical grin.

"How are you going to do it, Wilkinson?"

His chief did not reply immediately. His hesitation made the other's grin widen all the more.

"I'll have to work that out, Flomerfelt," presently he said, "but I'll do it. He might as well smart as anyone else. Besides, what will it amount to, anyway? An investigation—censure—a few bribes—and—— The rest of us can go to Europe and enjoy ourselves until it's blown over."

"If it ever blows over," put in Flomerfelt. Then he stretched out his arm and laid his long, lean fingers on the sleeve of Wilkinson's coat.

"Peter V.," he said in a low voice, "I'll give

you credit in this, as well as in other things; but let me tell you something: while you've been mumbling here, I've worked your idea out—sketched in the details."

"You don't say!" cried Wilkinson. "Good boy! Well?" And he looked at him questioningly.

But Flomerfelt shook his head.

"No, chief, I'll work it out myself. But I'll say this much, I've got a hold on nearly every man in the Tri-State Trust Company, the Interstate also. There are things to be done, things to be sworn to, and only I know how. . . ." He withdrew his hand. "The question is, Wilkinson," he went on, "am I to get good pay? . . . This thing is more serious than you think. It won't blow over, take my word for it. A million people in three States are up in arms; what's more, District Attorney Murgatroyd is up in arms, too."

"You get paid well enough, Flomerfelt, I should think."

"Not well enough," he declared. And again his thoughts went aloft to the daughter of his chief.

Wilkinson touched a button; in silence the two men waited for it to be answered. In a somewhat irritated manner Wilkinson touched it again, and thundered out:

"What's become of the servants?"

Flomerfelt leaned over in alarm.

"The wires—the wires are cut!" he exclaimed. "The telephone is disconnected," he went on, his face growing ashen with the fear and mystery of it all.

Wilkinson's excitement was evidenced by the manner in which he shook his finger in the other's face, called him a fool, and ordered him to go and fetch the servants that they might explain how the thing occurred. And he ended with: "Go now, be quick about it!"

At the door, Flomerfelt stopped. In the entrance was Leslie.

"These wires have been tampered with!" he cried out to her. "Does anybody in this house know how?"

Leslie ignored the question, but instead she said:

"Mrs. Wilkinson wishes to speak with you, Mr. Flomerfelt. You will find her upstairs, in her boudoir.

Flomerfelt bowed.

"I'll go up with you at once," he told her; but Leslie shook her head.

"No, you'd better go alone. I know about the wires. I came down expressly to tell father about them."

Flomerfelt reddened with annoyance, nevertheless he started to leave the room.

"I say," called out Wilkinson after him, "tell

those Pinkertons to drive Ilingsworth away downtown—take him to any place he wants to go, set him loose. If he runs away, you understand, it will be all the better for us. And if he doesn't, it will be all the worse for him."

"I'll take care of it, Mr. Wilkinson," said Flomerfelt, adopting the prefix that he used in the presence of a third party. "The plan is yours; the details belong to me."

With considerable trepidation Leslie approached her father.

"You're not going to set that Mr. Ilingsworth free!" she begged. "Father, don't do it! He's dangerous! I told you he had murder in his mind—I saw it to-day."

Little by little Wilkinson drew from her the whole story, with the exception of her father's terrible arraignment by Giles Ilingsworth; and that, for reasons of her own, she left out of her recital.

"Come, come," demanded Wilkinson, shrewdly reading his daughter's face, "you haven't told me everything! I want to know the rest."

The girl looked away as she said falteringly:

"The rest is nothing—really, there is nothing to tell."

"If it's nothing, then you'd better tell it to me anyway," he persisted. "Come, dear, what is it that you're holding back?"

For a moment that seemed minutes to her father, Leslie hid her face upon his shoulder, and did not speak. Finally she broke out with:

"Only something that he told me that I know is false; but if you must know, I'll tell you what he said. . . ."

On the floor above, Mrs. Peter V. Wilkinson, still in her flowered-silk kimona, received her husband's confidential man.

"Sit there," she directed, pointing to a chair close to the sofa on which now she was reclining, propped up by numberless bright-hued silken pillows.

Flomerfelt did as he was bid, not omitting to kiss the hand that she had extended to him.

"Now, Flomerfelt," she began, an anxious look on a face that was usually expressionless, "I want to know just where I stand in all this. For if there's going to be a crash, I want to know precisely what I've got—that is, how much money?"

Flomerfelt did not answer at once.

"You know," he said slowly, "that it has not been the custom of Peter V. to give money to his wife, rather, I should say, to put money in her name. Like every other business man, he has always needed ready cash, and——"

"But how do I stand?" she interrupted, im-

patiently. "What have I got? Tell me; I must know."

"Well, to begin with, there are your jewels," he declared. "They are worth thousands—perhaps hundreds of thousands."

"And this house stands in my name, doesn't it?" she asked, brushing away the question of a few hundred thousands.

"It does," was his brief answer, but without enthusiasm.

"And the house is worth at least ten million dollars, isn't it?" she went on, with some show of satisfaction. "That's what it cost to build."

Flomerfelt shook his head.

"I should say that it cost much less."

"What!" she gasped. "Why, everybody says it did. The papers . . ."

Flomerfelt thought a moment.

"I should think four million was an outside figure," he declared. "I know Peter V. doesn't consider it worth more than that."

"Well, four million is something, at any rate," she returned, mollified. "I can live on that."

Flomerfelt began to pace the room.

"The difficulty with it, Mrs. Peter V., is that it is mortgaged. The trust companies hold mortgages on it to the extent of five million dollars, at least."

Mrs. Wilkinson reached forth and drew him back into his seat.

"Do sit down, Flomerfelt!" she cried; "and don't be a fool! What do you mean by telling me that the property isn't worth more than four million, and that, notwithstanding that, the trust companies have loaned five million on it—more than its value? What trust company would do a thing like that?"

Flomerfelt's gaze took in the lady of the flowered-silk kimona from the sole of her foot to the top of her head.

"Um—such trust companies as the Interstate and Tri-State." He paused a moment, and then added: "With such a man as Giles Ilingsworth handling the reins——"

"Giles Ilingsworth!" she broke in. "Who is Giles Ilingsworth? Why, I never heard of him."

Flomerfelt looked at her in well-feigned astonishment.

"You never heard of Giles Ilingsworth! He was the power behind the throne—the man who wrecked the companies—who did more, who wrecked Peter V. Wilkinson." He made a movement to go. "There is nothing further I can do for you, I suppose, Mrs. Peter V.——?"

For the briefest of moments the lady gazed at him in silent contemplation. Then motioning him again to sit beside her,—which he did,—she drew

his head down close to her lips, and patted it affectionately.

"Flomerfelt, you're a good friend of mine?" she said.

Wilkinson's confidential man straightened up.

"That depends on how good a friend you are of mine," he answered, looking her full in the face.

The eyes of Margaret Lane Wilkinson narrowed.

"You do your best to see that I don't come out at the little end of the horn, Flomerfelt—take care of my interests, even against——"

"Even against Peter V. Wilkinson," breathed Flomerfelt.

"Even against Peter V. Wilkinson," breathed the woman. There was a pause, and presently she added: "On every occasion, no matter what the question, I shall agree with you."

"You forget to take into consideration that there's a girl named Leslie Wilkinson, who——"

She stopped him with a concluding gesture.

"No, not for one moment have I forgotten her," she affirmed. "If the worst comes to the worst, Leslie has enough to keep us both."

Flomerfelt bent over her.

"It's a bargain," he announced. "We'll seal it with a kiss."

"Why, Mr. Flomerfelt, I never have kissed

anybody except Peter V.," she simpered, blushing all the while.

"I couldn't help it," he told her on leaving, and passing through the door, closed it gently behind him. On the second landing he stopped and thought a while. "Not a bad scheme, that scheme of hers," he mused to himself. "She doesn't altogether realise that if the time ever comes when we fight Wilkinson, she and I, that we will be fighting a man still worth a hundred million dollars. At any rate," he concluded, "my game is first to fight for Wilkinson, and then—against him."

Meanwhile, in her boudoir, the lady had hastened to the mirror to contemplate her fairness.

"He's not such a bad chap, after all, that Flomerfelt," she acknowledged to herself.

IV

PETER V. WILKINSON in the Den below was having a bad quarter of an hour with his daughter Leslie. For, truth to tell, there was no person in the universe whose judgment he dreaded more than the judgment of this girl who sat before him: it was his one passion to appear well in her eyes. He had listened, with keen interest, to what she had to say, invariably seeking her glance, at times leaning forward with unusual intentness in order not to lose a single word. Time and time again her words, unintentionally it is true, stung him to the quick. And yet, he had not even gulped down his emotion. He had faced her, quiet, calculating, with a countenance at times interested, at times amused. Not once had he interrupted her; not once apologised. At the start he had wondered just what he should say when she had finished, had thought of denials, of indignation, of calling on the absent accuser for his proofs; but as her tale unfolded, he merely continued to chew the black, unlighted cigar that he held in his mouth.

"Have you told me all?" he asked, glancing up at the high window with its leaded panes.

The girl, shamefaced, downcast, because of her doubts of her father, flushed and nodded a "yes."

Wilkinson smiled, and leaning across the table, looked her full in the eyes.

"Girlie," he told her, suavely, "you know I'm glad you told me this. I want you to be just as frank in telling me everything else that bothers you—especially about myself. I'm glad you told me this," he repeated, "because, because it's true."

The girl jumped up from her seat, and exclaimed incredulously:

"True! Father, it can't be true!"

He waved her back again to her chair, took a fresh cigar, lighted it, and then said squarely:

"It's the Gospel truth. With just one exception—an immaterial correction that I want to make—what you have said is fact, only you've got the wrong sow by the ear."

"The what!" stammered the girl.

Wilkinson waved a deprecating hand.

"I should have said that your story is all right, but it's told about the wrong man," he explained.

Leslie's eyes sparkled.

"Then you mean to say——"

"I mean to say," interrupted her father grimly, "that the man who concocted that very clever scheme was not myself, but quite another person."

"You don't mean Mr. Flomerfelt?" she put in quickly.

Wilkinson rose, his eyes blazing with righteous indignation.

"Who understands the methods of a thief better than a thief! Who can tell you how to rob a bank so well as the thug who robbed it! Leslie, the man who tried that scheme," he went on with great emphasis, "and who, trying it, dragged us all to ruin, is the man who told you his story in this room to-day. It is Giles Ilingsworth of the Tri-State Trust Company."

Leslie fell back before him in astonishment.

"I—I can't believe it," was all she could say.

Wilkinson laughed gently, generously.

"I don't ask you to believe it, girlie. But let me ask you a question: A year ago, did you ever hear my trust companies questioned? was there any doubt of the integrity of the Interstate and Tri-State?—you know there wasn't. Well, thirteen months ago we took on this Giles Ilingsworth —new blood, you understand—who brought in a whole lot of new bloods with him. We didn't understand then that he was a get-rich-quick proposition." Wilkinson chuckled in spite of his indignation. "We believed, rather, that he was an honest, sober-minded, experienced chap, solid and, well, I thought I could take my ease, thought I had a man who would run things right and let me have the fun I've earned so hard. I let him go his gait. And what did he try to do for us?

Just what he accused me of doing this afternoon."

Wilkinson sank into his chair and covered his face with his hands. Leslie darted around the corner of the big desk and threw her arms about him.

"I knew—I knew——" she sobbed in her joy. She pressed her young, fair face against his grizzled jowl. "My father . . ." she whispered softly to him, as though to some lover, "my father, will you believe that I never really doubted you? It sounded so true on the instant——"

Wilkinson drew her to his knee and kissed her.

"I don't wonder you believed him, girlie," he said after a while. "Why shouldn't he fool you, when he fooled your old father."

The girl still clung to him, but Wilkinson felt the strain beginning to tell, felt that his face was growing ashen with fatigue, and now that it was over he needed solitude. So he placed her lightly on her feet, and tapping her affectionately on the shoulder, said:

"Run along now, girlie. And on your way out you might tell Jordan that I'm not to be disturbed for fifteen minutes—not even by that Flomerfelt, who seems to be wandering around upstairs in our private apartments. That man gets on my nerves so that I can't think."

After Leslie had gone, for some moments Wil-

kinson, in silence, puffed away at his black cigar. Then, with considerable deliberation, he rose, went over to the door, and locked and bolted it. Absorbed in his thoughts, he remained standing there for a long time. When he turned back toward the desk, a woman stood there, facing him—a woman, young, tall, slender, with very dark hair and dark blue eyes, a woman with a strange mixture of hope and trouble in her eyes.

Wilkinson's face paled; he was angry through and through. Nevertheless he struggled to appear calm.

"Confound it, Madeline," he said tactfully, "I forgot all about you. This blamed excitement put it all out of my head." But in the next breath his manner changed, and he burst out with: "What the deuce is your car doing at my door?"

"Your car, not mine," she reminded him gently.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It happens to be yours," he corrected, "for I gave it to you, didn't I?"

"We won't go into that," wearily she replied.

Wilkinson looked her sternly in the eye.

"We'll cut out the question of ownership. What's more to the point, is, what the devil you're doing in my house? If you wanted to see me, why didn't you wait for me to come to you? My wife is upstairs," he went on severely, "and my

daughter all around the place. They probably both know you, even though they don't know. . . . You might have waited——"

"I couldn't do that," she answered, faltering. "I—I had to see you, and I couldn't wait. Do you suppose I would have come here—to your home—if there hadn't been some urgency about it. I wrote; you did not answer."

"The Tri-State kept me on the jump," he half apologised. "I had no time to read love letters——"

"Love letters? Indeed!" she interjected, and then went on: "I called at the Trust Company office to see you, sent messages, called you up on the 'phone, but to no avail. I had to see you even at the risk of your displeasure. Besides, no one has seen me but you."

Wilkinson started.

"You've been here in this room all the time—what?"

"Behind those curtains," she informed him, emphasising her words with a nod toward them.

Wilkinson advanced on the woman as if he were about to strike her, for now he knew that she had been spying upon him, had been a witness to Flomerfelt's confidences, had listened to the colloquy between Leslie and himself; but, making a great effort, he checked his mad im-

pulse, and, instead, endeavoured to make no point whatever of her presence there. He knew Madeline Braine's comprehension of business schemes was nil. To direct her attention to anything she had heard would be unwise.

"You couldn't have chosen a better place," he told her genially.

And then it was that suddenly something seemed to snap within his brain. The terrible excitement of the past few weeks was beginning to tell on him; a wild yearning to escape all further responsibility, to rove free, careless, reckless, took possession of him. The woman before him was lovely to look upon, he liked her, and why not chuck the whole game, so he termed it, take her away with him, anywhere, to South America, to the ends of the world?

"Why not?" he exclaimed, touching her on the shoulder.

The woman looked at him, surprised.

"I say, Madeline," he went on, happily, "I've been so busy of late that I haven't seen as much of you as I would have liked. Besides, you were good enough to be out the last two times I looked you up. Do you know," he was close to her now, his hot breath upon her face, "I don't think I ever loved you quite as much as now. Suppose I take a rest from business, and we'll take a ten-days' trip in the *Marchioness*. We'll have a bully

good time! Come, Madeline, say the word, and I'll do it."

Madeline eluded his amorous embrace, and slipping to the side of the desk placed upon it a small black bag.

"One of the things, Peter V.," she said quietly, "I came for, was to bring these back."

Wilkinson looked at the bag inquisitively. He wondered what surprise she had in store for him, and smilingly proceeded to open it.

"Jewels!" he exclaimed, eyeing her for a moment in uncertainty; and the next moment his hand brought forth a handful of rings.

"Yes, those and the automobile," she faltered, forcing the words out, "I want to give them back to you."

The man broke suddenly into a good-natured, affectionate laugh.

"You've been reading the papers, I see, and thought the old man was down and out. You were going to put up your jewels and truck to help me out? Well, I'll be——" He caught her hand impulsively. "Say, Madeline, you're a good sort, and no mistake about it!" And now, snapping the little bag together, he passed it back to her. "But you're all wrong, my dear, I'm not strapped—not much! This is between ourselves, though, understand. You keep your jewels, and the car, too. There's many a good time coming

to us yet. Don't you worry, now—and don't forget that I appreciate your goodness to me. I do, indeed."

"You don't understand me," she said, retreating under his advances. "I brought these back to you, because I'm going to break with you. I——"

Wilkinson looked at her dumbfounded.

"Break with me! What? Surely you're joking. Why, no woman ever broke with Peter V. Wilkinson voluntarily. I've broken with a score or more, but this is a new one on me. Break with me? What for?" He leaned back against his desk.

There was nothing more to say; the girl had spoken in finality. She drew herself up to her full height and looked down upon him. And as she stood there in all her slenderness, she had never seemed more beautiful to him.

"I think I understand now," presently he said, white with anger. "You really thought, like the rest, that I was a sinking ship; and you were going to desert me, like the rats, before I sank. That's the idea, is it? Well, you're mightily mistaken, my girl." And now he held out his hand to her in appeal. "You don't want me to prove that I'm as sound as a dollar, do you? For I can and will." And then he went on to tell her that he had all his money stowed away. "I have,

for a fact," he concluded; "but this is in confidence. And now you won't leave me, will you? Somehow, I can't let you go."

"Peter, I thought I might be able to do this without telling you the truth," she said, with a note almost of tenderness in her voice. "But I see I've got to make myself plain to you. I'm going to break with you for the reason that—that there's someone else."

The words fell dully on his ears.

" . . . Someone else," he repeated. He looked at her long and searchingly before continuing:

"But how can there be anyone else? I've got all the money that there is in little old New York! What more do you want? Who else——" And then, without waiting for a reply: "It isn't Wilgerot? No? Then it's Debevoise?"

She shook her head.

"Look here, Madeline, it isn't that Dumont Mapes?" he cried. "You wouldn't shake me for a rake like that, would you?"

"I can't tell you who it is," was all the girl would say.

"But I want to know," insisted the man. "You've got to tell me."

"If you must know, then, it is a man I love—a man I'm going to marry," she answered softly.

Wilkinson returned to his desk, to a fresh cigar.

This was another problem, and problems were in his line, it seemed.

"You're going to marry somebody rich, I suppose," he said at length.

A smile crossed her face.

"Somebody poor," she answered.

"Poor! Why in heaven's name should you marry somebody that's poor?"

"Peter, I told you I loved him," she repeated, still smiling.

Wilkinson was conscious of a curious, indefinable sensation; an emotion that heretofore had been foreign to his nature.

"And—and," he stammered, battling with this new sensation, "he loves you, I suppose?"

"I know he does," she answered.

The millionaire puffed silently.

"He must love you," he went on at length, in brutal tones, "to—to forgive all this." And stretching his arms wide into a circle that included her and himself, he added: "He's willing to forget the past?"

The girl did not answer. But on her face was a death-like pallor.

"Ah!" he cried, quickly noting her change of colour. "Then he doesn't know!"

No one better than Madeline Braine could better realise the full import of this sneer. Advancing toward him, her limbs dragging against her

skirts, giving her the appearance of a woman struggling forward on her knees, she caught at one corner of the desk and leaned against it, crying:

"Peter, I love this man. You won't—why should he know——"

"Why shouldn't he?" was the man's cruel answer. "You love him . . ."

"No, no, no!" she cried. "Don't you understand—we're going away—going West, never to come back. If he doesn't know, all will be well . . ."

"Oh, so everything is going to be lovely," grinned Peter, "until he finds out. But when he finds out? What then?"

For a long time she pleaded with him, while he, lolling back comfortably in his chair, leisurely blew rings of smoke in the air. Finally he rose, and held out his hand.

"You're sure, Madeline, that you've made up your mind to leave me? Sure?"

For answer, the girl inclined her head.

Wilkinson frowned.

"This interview is at an end. From now on, madam, we'll deal at arm's length." Then he added, laughing brutally: "Until you find it desirable to come back again to me." He unlocked the door and opened it sufficiently to permit her to pass. "Good-day."

Without a word she passed out and down the hall. At the entrance she found Jordan, who rose and bowed.

"Tell my man," she ordered, pointing to the blue limousine without, "that he need wait no longer—that I shall remain here to-night."

Jordan's heart popped into his mouth at this unexpected declaration. With difficulty he asked her to repeat her message, after which he stepped out to the curb and delivered it. And it was not until the machine started up and had gathered speed for its homeward journey that she gave the order to the footman to open the door for her.

With a sigh of relief the footman cheerfully complied, and bowed her out.

"First she said she was going to stay all night, and then she said she wasn't," he repeated rhythmically, "and now I wonder where the devil she's gone?"

Madeline Braine was hardly out of hearing when Wilkinson sent post-haste for Flomerfelt.

"Flomerfelt," he cried, the minute that worthy entered the room, "I've got a new job for you. Forget the Tri-State,—it's trivial, compared with this,—and find out the name of the man Madeline Braine is going to marry."

"Marry!" gasped Flomerfelt.

Wilkinson clutched him by the wrist, and continued: "And when you've found out his name,

find the man. And when you find the man, buttonhole him. . . ."

"Buttonhole him!" echoed the astonished Flomerfelt. "Don't you mean throttle him?"

"Buttonhole him," repeated Wilkinson savagely, "and then tell him all about the girl he loves—and me."

A few days later, alone in a bare, hall-bedroom, on the east side of the big city, Madeline Braine sat staring, with eyes that saw not, into the gloom without. Well might she reflect that nothing but a miracle could save her now; well might her reason totter at the thought of what life held for her in the future. The letter in her lap read:

" . . . There's no use in my seeing you again. I take it from your silence that you prefer not to explain what I have learned about you—what I have proved to myself to be a fact—the truth of your relations with Peter V. Wilkinson. I start West to-night.

"Yours,

"H. T."

V

In Mrs. Pallet-Searing's house on Fifth Avenue was an authorised hiding-place intended, evidently, for no more than two persons, which was reached by a short journey through the interior flower-garden: an undignified plunge between some half-dozen palm-tubs, and a short ascent up a wide, circular staircase.

In this haven,—known only to the initiated,—a week later, Eliot Beekman and Leslie Wilkinson had been sitting for some time.

"We must have been here three hours!" the girl suddenly exclaimed in tones of deep contrition. "Half the people must have gone. I've deliberately cut every man on the last half of my card," she rattled on, "thereby completely ruining my chances of ever marrying any of them; and besides," she concluded limply, "what will Mrs. Pallet-Searing have to say . . ."

"How did we get here, anyway?" questioned the young man.

"I led the way," confessed the girl, opening wide her eyes, and glancing daringly into his. "Mrs. Pallet-Searing says that this place is a trap; and, that Pallet-Searing says, that she's a terribly designing woman. She says that he says

that more—more matches have been made on account of this moonlit spot than in any other place in the Borough of Manhattan."

The face of Eliot Beekman flushed, his eyes were unnaturally bright. If only he had dared, with his strong right arm he would have drawn the dainty head of Leslie Wilkinson down on his shoulder and would have kissed her then and there. But he understood the girl too well—or thought he did.

"A match-making cosy-corner," he mused. "How many others have you fetched here before—have preceded me?"

Leslie laughingly rose and stood looking down upon him.

"You're quite the first, I assure you, Mr. Beekman," she answered, still smiling.

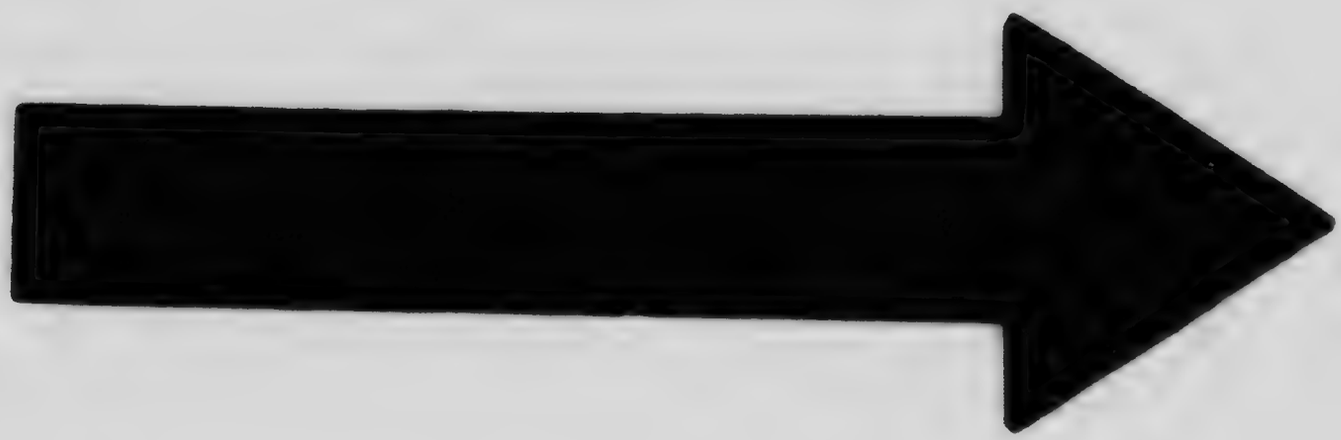
"Are you—are you sure?" he faltered, becoming suddenly serious.

"Quite sure," she answered, catching his mood.

Beekman rose, the flush deepening on his face. His breath came fast.

"Why, then——" he began; but the girl quickly held up her hand.

"Now, don't be silly, don't!" she pleaded. "We've been foolish enough as it is. People will talk, you know; they'll say that it's the get-rich-quick strain in me that makes me do these ill-bred, extraordinary things. But indeed it is not. My



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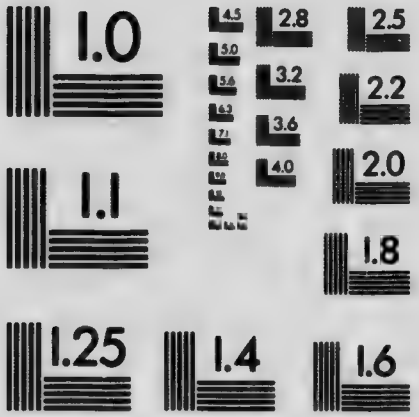

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own mother, Mr. Beekman," she went on soberly, "was a charming woman—a lady who would never have associated with some of the people that one meets here, even. It must be the pure deviltry in me that makes me do some things—pure deviltry, I assure you, that's all."

"To lead some impecunious devil to the most exclusive match-making place in America, and then refuse to . . . Pure deviltry! I should think——"

Leslie's brow wrinkled.

"But Mrs. Pallet-Searing? What is she going to say?" broke in the girl.

"Say! Say nothing at all, of course. She and Pallet-Searing must have occupied similar cosy-corners, I suppose, years ago," he answered, with a smile.

"I don't quite see the application," returned Leslie, puzzled. "Very likely they had the right: they were engaged, and afterwards married."

"True," said Beekman, his eyes feasting on her. "And I don't understand why history can't repeat itself right here and now. The fact is, your hostess will be disappointed—will be annoyed, I'm sure, at our stupidity, if we do not make the most of our opportunity."

Leslie smiled a glorious smile upon him.

"Mr. Beekman," she whispered softly, "do you think we've been so very stupid?"

If only he had dared, . . . he would have drawn the dainty head of Leslie Wilkinson down on his shoulder and would have kissed her then and there

She touched him lightly on the arm. He tried to seize her hand, but she drew it from him.

"I don't believe," he said, "that we've got any right to leave this fascinating retreat, and go down and face the crowd without being—well, without being engaged. That is, according to my idea of the Pallet-Searings' idea, we'd be considered a dull young couple, to say the least."

"But I'd be cutting myself out of many a delightful hour here!" Leslie shook her head.

"Not necessarily," he persisted.

She tilted her head critically.

"And this is all I'm to get for sitting out the best part of an evening with a girl, when I might have been down there with the madding crowd, having the time of my life," he added.

Leslie moved to go.

"We've made several false starts from here," she reminded him, "but we must go now without any further hesitation, and by separate routes. Good-bye," she said, and held out her hand. "Shall I see you at the landing-place at eight o'clock sharp in the morning?"

Beekman drew her back.

"At what landing-place?" he demanded, uncertain of her meaning. "What's going on?"

The girl fell back helplessly before him.

"Do you mean to tell me," she sighed forlornly, "that I have been here all this time with

you without telling you the very thing I brought you here to tell?"

"I only know," he returned, likewise forlornly, "that you won't let me tell you the thing that for hours I've been trying to tell."

Leslie laughed gaily.

"It was very delightful listening, anyway," she admitted frankly. "But about this other thing—I told everybody here, that is, everybody that's to go, but you—and you, why I wanted you the most of all."

Beekman caught her hand and held it, despite her dignified little struggle.

"You're sure of that?"

"Quite sure," she replied, in a matter-of-fact tone. "You need a little tan—the sail would do you good. Why, twenty of us boys and girls,—besides some half-dozen chaperones—are going for the week-end on the *Marchioness*. Away out to sea as far as she can stand it, and back again. It ought to be good fun! There'll be only congenial people aboard—the right men for the right girls."

"But for yourself, Miss Wilkinson, who——"

"My dear young friend," she broke in upon his question, "inasmuch as I am hostess, I see no reason why I shouldn't have the whole ten men most of the time, do you? I'm a pretty fair manager about these things, you know," she went

on interestedly, "and I thought for you that Jane Gerard. . . ."

Beekman coughed slightly and glanced at his watch.

"A most delightful trip," he conceded, "and I should be glad, awfully glad to be able to take advantage of the opportunity if it were not that I am so very busy, and——"

Leslie was quick to detect his annoyance, but went on, still flirtatiously:

"Of course, I could pair off Jane Gerard with Larry Pendexter, though I was thinking of keeping him myself. . . ." She pursed her lips, and stood for a moment with her eyes half-closed. Presently, she said: "I think maybe *it could* be arranged." And laughing, now, added: "You'll surely come, won't you?"

"Come!" he exclaimed, beaming with joy. "I'd come in the face of a million dollar retainer from John D. Rockefeller—I would, indeed!"

A few minutes later, when she faced her hostess to bid her good-night, that estimable lady, not altogether satisfied with Leslie's nonchalant manner, laid her hand on her young guest's shoulder, and drew her to one side.

"I hope, my dear," she said insinuatingly, "that it's not going to be Eliot Beekman. He's all right, little one—handsome, and clean, too. But what you need is money—don't forget

that—particularly no Take my advice—Eliot is dangerous." The lady sighed. "I've known such men—I knew one of them once." Her eyes sought the portly form of Pallet-Searing across the big room. "And I married Pallet-Searing. It's been worth while." But there was a sigh in her voice, the girl thought, as she repeated again, "worth while. Run along now! Mrs. Wilkinson has been looking everywhere for you. Even Peter V. looked in to take you home. They've both gone. But here comes Eliot now." And turning to Beekman, the lady shook her finger at him. "I've been warning Leslie against you, Eliot," she said, frankly, telling him to his face what she had said behind his back. "I've been warning her that she must look for money. And, oh, by the way, Eliot! Somebody's been here after you to-night. We searched everywhere for you except in one place, and nobody is ever allowed to look there. Colonel Morehead is the man."

Beekman started.

"You don't by any chance happen to know——"

"Business," interposed Mrs. Pallet-Searing; "at least, he said it was."

Beekman gave vent to a slight gesture of annoyance.

"I wish I might have seen him. But he's gone, I suppose?"

Mrs. Pallet-Searing laughed outright.

"You surely don't regret the fact that we couldn't find you, Eliot?"

Beekman laughed sheepishly, and shot a glance of guilt toward Leslie.

"That isn't the point. It simply gives me an involuntary pang when somebody looks me up on business and I miss them. I have a feeling that, somehow, I may have lost an opportunity; and chaps like me can't well afford to miss a man like Colonel Morehead."

". . . How are you going to get home, child?" suddenly asked her hostess of Leslie. "Your machine is out there, but——"

Leslie hesitated for an instant.

"Possibly Mr. Beekman . . ." she laughed mischievously.

Beekman looked up with mock gravity.

"Miss Wilkinson," he said, "you've heard that old saying about the game and the name? Come!" And he took her by the arm.

Mrs. Pallet-Searing watched the happy young couple leave her house, and her face took on an expression little in accord with the worldly and cynical advice that she had given the girl a few moments before.

From her corner of the limousine Leslie confided to Beekman:

"Do you know that every time I do something,

have something, or give something, now that we live on Bankrupt Row, up there on the Drive, I have to explain to everybody that it's my money, and not my father's, as most people imagine."

"I wish I could do something for you or your father, but I'm only an atom of an aggregation here in New York, confound it!"

Leslie looked at him gratefully, but went on:

"My money must support the family. Father lost everything he had."

"I—I didn't know that you had any money." He laughed uncomfortably. "I'm one of these chaps who has to blurt things out, Miss Wilkinson, and so I'll tell you just what I thought. Of course I didn't really want Peter V. Wilkinson to fail—I was sorry when I heard about it. But when I knew it had to happen, that it was inevitable—Oh, confound it, I was glad, and for my own selfish reason."

"Very kind of you to gloat over our misfortune," was her brief comment, uttered by no means seriously.

"I thought," went on Beekman, grimly, "that it would put us more on an equal footing, that perhaps I would have the right to——"

"Oh, the right, did you say? I never thought you worried much over that," she said with truly feminine perversity.

There was a pause. Beekman was the first to speak.

"A terribly complicated matter, this making love to a rich girl. In the first place——"

"Is this an argument before a court?" she inquired, playfully.

"Before the last court of appeals," he answered quickly. "And the gist of it is this: How the deuce can a rich girl ever know that anybody ever loves her?"

"Do you suppose she cannot tell?"

"You can't. Look at the rich women who have been fooled—either fooled, or else satisfied to be sought for what they've got and not for what they are! You know them by the score."

"I think I should know if anyone loved me."

The man shook his head.

"There is only one way to make the perfect test," he told her, "and that's impossible. To rid yourself of every dollar for all time, and then see what happens."

The girl made no answer.

"You see," he went on, "of all the women in the world, the rich American girl, in my opinion, stands the least chance to be mated as she should be. If she marries money, ten chances to one it's money she marries and not a man; if she marries a beggar, she gets an adventurer. The reason for this, is: the honest American men will not

aspire to the hand of a girl of wealth; and those are the very men that the rich girl ought to marry. Unfortunately, however, they are just as independent in their way as she is in hers. You ought to come down and be poor," he concluded, helping her to alight, for the limousine was now in front of the Wilkinson house.

They crossed the pavement to the doorway. There she asked:

"Do you know any honest, poor man, who will——" She broke off abruptly, recognising her audacity, and then added: "Don't forget, at eight to-morrow morning. Those not on time will get left—for at two minutes past eight the *Ma..ioness* will be out in the middle of the Hudson. Until then,"—and she gave him her hand, —"at the landing——"

"Not at the landing," he broke in. "I'm going to start from here. I'll call for you just to see that Larry Pendexter keeps himself to himself, or at least to Jane Gerard. Is it a go?"

Leslie did not answer. Instead she flashed him a bewildering smile as she passed through the door which Jeffries held open for her.

Half way down the hall, Leslie ran into Roy Pallister. His face was haggard and unduly white. She started back as she saw him.

"Why, Roy!" she ..ed, unconsciously calling him by his first name; "what has happened?"

The boy flushed as his name fell from her lips.

"Miss Leslie," he began stumblingly, seemingly embarrassed by the searching gaze she rested on him, "nothing—that is, nothing that's imminent. Your——"

"My father!" she queried. "Has anything——"

"They," pointing to the floor above, "seem to treat it lightly. I'm a beast for frightening you; but I think your father feels—fears——"

"Mr. Pallister, what are you keeping from me? What is the matter?"

The gentle little fellow steadied himself for a moment against the wall, and then, as she made a movement to go, he drew her back.

"Miss Leslie, I've been wanting to tell you something—I've been waiting for the chance. If ever in the future you need help—help of any kind, you'll let me know," he said with lips that trembled. "I want to be sure that you understand just what I mean. I've never done anything for you, Miss Leslie, and——"

"Why, yes you have; indeed you have . . ." she assured him, and her look was one of genuine affection.

The boy shook his head.

"I want your promise that you'll come to me if——"

Leslie did not wait to hear any more, but

breaking from him, ran swiftly up the stairs. At the first landing she turned and looked back: he was standing very straight and very quiet by the newel post, glancing up at her with intense admiration. In a flash she was back to the foot of the stairs holding out her hand to him.

"I promise, Roy," she said impulsively. "You're the best-hearted fellow going! Good-night!"

At the door of her step-mother's apartment, Leslie paused. A babel of voices came from behind the closed doors—the voices of many men and one woman. Quickly in answer to her knock and question "May I come in?" the door was thrown back, and Flomerfelt, her father's confidential man, stood framed in the doorway, bowing elaborately. In a glance, despite the haze of cigar smoke, she saw that the company consisted of her father, her father's wife, and another man. With a glad cry, she rushed over to this other man and grasped his hand.

"Colonel Morehead! The sight of you. . . ."

In an instant, Colonel Morehead's thin lips parted in a smile. He made an old-fashioned bow and then sank back into his chair.

"You were at Amy Pallet-Searing's to-night," the girl went on, "and you never looked me up. Be good enough to explain yourself, sir!"

Colonel Morehead removed his glasses and pol-

ished them upon his handkerchief before answering:

"I was busy looking up somebody else," he said, and Leslie saw that the smile had left his face as he resumed his tap-tapping on the table with his fingers; she saw, too, that her father's face was a bit white where the skin showed. He looked tired, but his thick Van Dyke bristled aggressively, and his eyebrows breathed the usual defiance.

"Where were you, Leslie, that we couldn't find you anywhere?" demanded her step-mother, irritably. "How did you get home?"

"Very comfortably in the limousine, thank you," replied Leslie. "Mr. Beekman was good enough——"

Colonel Morehead leaped to his feet.

"Not Eliot Beekman! What? He came home with you?" He started for the door. "Why, he's the man I've been looking for. Where is he now?"

"Undoubtedly home, by this time," said Leslie.

The Colonel again reseated himself and drummed loudly with his fingers.

"Hang it!" he ejaculated. "If I'd only known. . . . He could have been with us here now. We need him—and badly."

Wilkinson looked puzzled.

"Why do we need him?" Wilkinson asked the question in a voice in which excitement still held sway.

"That's what I should like to know!" put in Mrs. Wilkinson, gulping down, not without audible satisfaction, her customary night-cap.

Leslie blushed as she added that the question likewise was of interest to her.

"We're disgraced, that's all there is to it!" snapped the mistress of the house, her night-cap, even at this early stage, lending her asperity. "And I the most of all! I don't see how this Beekman can help us out?"

"I don't myself," admitted her husband. "However, nothing can happen so long as Colonel Morehead sticks to us—nothing."

"I have no intention of deserting you, don't be alarmed," declared Colonel Morehead. "But for all that, I want this man Beekman—I need him." And so saying he lifted from the small table a document consisting of several sheets of carbon-copy.

"Miss Wilkinson," he said gravely, handing it to her. "No—there's nothing in it to startle you, only you should know, I think, we all ought to understand. . . . If you'll read this, you'll know what happened to your father this afternoon."

Puzzled at first, the girl slowly read the flimsy

document as she stood there in the middle of the room.

"Oh!" she wailed, as its meaning dawned upon her. "They had no right to do this—no right whatever!"

"You're sure you understand it?" interrogated the Colonel.

The girl bowed her head gravely. Then, going over to her father,—wholly unconscious of a curious look on Flomerfelt's face,—she threw her arms about his neck.

"Father, dear father," she whispered to him, "don't mind. We'll win out."

Her father submitted goodnaturedly but wearily to her embrace. He stretched his arms and yawned.

"I'm dog tired," he said, rising. "I'm going to bed. You'll stay all night, Morehead?"

"Not a bit of it," responded the Colonel. "You don't catch me deserting my own hard bed —not much! I'll go home." He shook hands with Mrs. Peter V. Wilkinson, and pressed a button.

"How about you, Flomerfelt? It's rather late . . ." said Peter V.

"Don't care if I do," was the latter's answer. And on the servant's appearing, Peter V. ordered him to show Mr. Flomerfelt to one of the guest rooms, concluding with: "Show him to the one

with the painted nymphs skylarking on the walls." Then he placed his arm around his daughter, and together they followed Colonel Morehead downstairs to the door, where they bade him goodnight.

Mrs. Wilkinson and Flomerfelt listened to the sound of retreating footsteps.

"He'll not be coming back," she said, "and I want to talk to you." And pointing to the document that Leslie had been shown, she asked: "What does all this signify?"

"What it signifies," he answered, picking up the paper, "may depend on you."

The woman looked puzzled.

"How?"

Flomerfelt's eyes narrowed. Then, with a lithe and dexterous movement of his long arms, he shot his cuffs—hitherto out of sight—into view; extending them, with a jerk, below his coat-sleeves, so that they covered his lean wrists to the extent of three-quarters of an inch, a distance which he measured with mathematical certainty, apparently, for his nice adjustment of them was followed critically by his glance. He eyed and adjusted one cuff until it satisfied him, and then eyed and adjusted the other; finally he rubbed his hands together, and said:

"One of the richest women in the world—rich in her own right. How does that sound to you?"

Mrs. Peter V. stared at him.

"Who is?" she inquired.

"It's a possibility that affects a woman in this house."

"Leslie?"

He shook his head.

"I was thinking of you."

"I? I'm not rich. I've been a fool!" she cried. "I should have made him settle something on me—half, at any rate. Now it's all gone; he's lost everything; I might as well have had half of it—as well that, as to t' row it in the gutter as he did."

Wilkinson's confidential man seated himself.

"Unquestionably you need me," he said frankly, and then stopped. Hitherto he had kept his own counsel. And yet, he reflected, there is a wisdom of disclosure just as there is a wisdom of suppression. Some new impulse seized him; his voice sank into a whisper. "There is a chance for us, Mrs. Peter V., to be rich, if we work together, unusually rich."

"But how?" she whispered back, excitedly.

Flomerfelt smiled inscrutably, and answered:

"Out of the wreck, there's a chance——"

"A good chance?" she interrupted eagerly.

"There's only one man who can prevent it," he went on.

"Peter V.——?"

A nod was her answer.

Immediately then she went back to first principles.

"What is going to happen to him? Will they put him in jail?"

Wilkinson's confidential man smiled.

"I've often wondered," he mused, "whether it would be good or bad for us if they jailed him. A man in prison is a man very much out of the way. But in this case he would be too much out of the way. Put him in jail and you discourage his defence—you encourage the public, his depositors. They'll do what we should do: infest the wreck and gobble up what is ours by right. No, so long as Peter Wilkinson lives, we must fight his battle for him—pull him through, keep him standing up, only to be able to knock him down later. That, so long as he lives, must be our policy. So long as he lives," he repeated.

"Suppose," she began, and then hazarded: "In case of his death, what would my rights be?"

"In case he dies——" suddenly he stopped. That was a possibility he had not foreseen. He had seen much strife ahead: first, a tremendous fight for Wilkinson, then a tremendous campaign against him. But what if the man should break down, die? There was food for thought, reasoned Flomerfelt.

"He might die," he resumed, holding her

glance as he went on, "for everything must be considered. Disgrace wouldn't kill him, but his liver, or,——" he jerked his thumb over his shoulder,—"there might be violence—conspiracies. There have been rumours that the trust company depositors are wild, especially the poor ones—socialists, we'll say. So, he might die—be killed. Who knows?"

Flomerfelt rose and looked down upon her long and earnestly.

"But we'll cross that bridge when we come to it, Mrs. Peter V. Good-night, my dear lady!" And bowing unusually low to her, he left the room.

VI

It was three o'clock in the morning when Eliot Beekman reached his club in Forty-fourth Street.

"There's a telegram for you, Mr. Beekman," called out a sleepy employé, from the office. "It was left here by your clerk to-night."

In his room Beekman switched on the light and read:

ELIOT BEEKMAN, ESQ.,
32 Nassau St., N. Y.

Meet us at Hotel Iroquois, Buffalo, to-morrow six P. M. Important letter follows. Wire answer. Do not fail.

BANK LE BOEUF,
J. K. W., Cashier.

"The Bank Le Boeuf of Buffalo! Sounds good; I hope it is good," mused Beekman. "If so, another big client added to my growing list."

Without hesitation he wrote an answering telegram, stating that he would be at the Hotel Iroquois at 6 P. M. the following night, took it downstairs, and left it in the office with instructions to send it as soon as possible.

And it was not until fifteen minutes later, in the midst of his speculations as to the nature of this business sent to him by the Bank Le Boeuf,

that the thought of Leslie's yachting-party came to him.

"Confound it!" he muttered to himself. "I clean forgot all about it. What am I going to do?"

Yet Beekman was so consistent that he recognised at once that there was nothing to do save what he had done. He had built up his practice without pull, influence or money; and he had done it by religiously conserving the interests of his clients. He knew, therefore, that he must obey this summons. So, assuring himself that Leslie would understand it when he told her in the morning, he removed his evening dress, swathed himself in a dressing-gown, stepped into his library and began to work. An unfinished job lay upon his table—a job that, he knew, would take past dawn to finish, and early in the evening he had determined not to go to bed. So he started in.

There was a neat supply of law books in his rooms—a good working library, an average lawyer would call it. And from the hour that he donned his dressing-gown, Beekman nosed among these tan-coloured volumes, taking down one from its shelf, scanning the headnotes of a given case, reading the opinion, slapping the book together and replacing it. A hundred times, at least, he did this. Finally, weary of his search, and hopelessly downcast, for so far his search had been in

vain, he found on the highest shelf a slender volume and opened it. And now, as he started to read, his eyes brightened and he quickly seized pen and paper.

"Eureka!" he exclaimed. "On all fours—just in point. By George, this—this wins the trick!"

Half an hour was spent in jotting down the salient portions of the opinion of the Court of Appeals. Then, restoring the book to its accustomed place, he folded up his memorandum neatly and thrust it into a heavy brown envelope, labelled: Turner vs. Cooper. And now with considerable complacency he leaned back, saying to himself:

"I thought sure I was licked. But I've got 'em! I'll bet dollars to doughnuts that Jameson & Bowers never even heard of that decision! Now," he stretched out his arms, "I'm ready for Leslie Wilkinson and the *Marchioness*—or, no," he corrected himself, "I mean I'm ready for the Empire State Express."

A moment more and he had turned on the faucet, filled the tub to the brim, and had plunged in—holding his head under the cold water for half a minute at a time. Completely refreshed, he dressed carefully, ascertained from the appearance of the heavens that it was likely to be clear, then quietly left his room and started down the

stairs and left the club. At the Grand Central Station he checked his grip. He had lots of time, even for the preliminary little journey that he proposed to take.

After getting some breakfast he strolled back to the West Side and sauntered up Sixth Avenue. The stores were all closed. One, however, as Beekman passed, opened up. From the door its proprietor, a little wizened Jew, nodded sleepily to Beekman. Returning the nod, the latter looked again at the store, and retracing his steps, entered.

"Ready for business?" inquired the lawyer.

The proprietor nodded.

"Alvays," he replied.

"This is a gun store?" queried Beekman.

The Jew yawned.

"Loogs like id," he conceded. "Did you vant to buy a gun?"

"I want ten cents' worth of shot," his customer replied, pointing out the size he wanted; and, after the storekeeper had weighed out the quantity and it had been dropped into his pockets, he started on his way rejoicing, making a bee line for Wilkinson's. It was getting-up time now, but not for people on the Drive. There silence reigned supreme.

But Beekman felt very wide awake. His conversation with Leslie the night before in the

Pallet-Searing cosy-corner, and his successful night's work had gone to his head like wine. And it was this condition that led him to purchase a handful of shot; and now, regardless of the fact that he was operating on the residence that had cost ten million dollars, more or less, and, in fact, regardless of consequences, he took his station in the middle of the Drive and selecting half a dozen missiles from his pocket, he flung them lightly through the air, aiming for a wide window-pane on the third story of the house. Three times he did this. The fourth time he was stopped by a voice calling out:

"Hi, there!"

Turning quickly Beekman found himself confronted with the majesty of the law.

"What're you trying to do?" demanded the officer. "Isn't it a bit early in the morning, or a bit late in the evening, to be out on a drunk? What's doin', anyway?"

Beekman grinned, desisting, nevertheless.

"A bit of old-time romance," he explained; "trying to wake her up, that's all."

"Is her name Norah?" demanded the bluecoat, threateningly.

Beekman glanced aloft; then he plucked the officer by the sleeve.

"Look for yourself," he rejoined, "and see. . . . Is that Norah up there?"

While the officer scanned the housetop, Beekman gazed innocently out over the Hudson.

"It is—not," he assented joyfully. "And so long as it is not, I have nought to say, except," the policeman's voice trailed off into a whisper, "except, sir, that the lady is waving to you. Look now, and see."

Beekman looked. There she was, indeed.

"I've been up an hour!" she cried. "Wait until I come down."

In the music-room, she greeted him with:

"Have you had your breakfast?"

"Yes. I came to tell you. . . ."

"Then you got my telegram all right?"

Beekman shook his head.

"You're not the Bank Le Boeuf of Buffalo?"

"I didn't phone you," she went on, ignoring his question, "because I couldn't, don't you know. But I sent a wire so you'd get it the first thing this morning—at your club."

"Crowd there too sleepy to get it to me, I suppose," he said, puzzled. "What was in it?" But without waiting for an answer, he went on: "I came to tell you about my telegram," and with that he passed it over to her. "Business before pleasure," he remarked tritely, and yet in a manner that he knew she would understand. "I can't go on the *Marchioness*, you see."

"The *Marchioness*," she responded, "is not

going after all. That's why I wired you. But I'm glad you came, because, somehow, I wanted you to know—before it appeared in the papers——" She paused, and then added, with much feeling: "The Grand Jury has indicted my father—late yesterday afternoon. As yet no one knows it; but everybody will know it by nine o'clock this morning. It may be in the papers now, though they tried to keep it out. It's a terrible thing—a thing like that! I can't see how, or why, they indicted him! Can you?"

Beekman looked his sympathy. Presently he asked:

"Do you mind my asking just what they charge him with?"

VII

THE Empire State Express had not travelled many miles when Eliot Beekman's attention was directed to a strange-looking man who sat across the aisle, facing him. From time to time the man's face flushed and gave little nervous starts and twitches, and, every now and then, he mumbled to himself. At first Beekman figured out that the man was recovering from an unaccustomed debauch; but afterwards he changed his mind: he decided that he was crazy.

"Glad to get away from New York," confided the stranger, breaking in on Beekman's meditations, and tapping him on the knee. "The farther away I get the better I like it."

Beekman somewhat resented this interference with his comfortable somnolence, but he straightened up and smiled and answered:

"For my part New York's home to me. I feel sick, somehow, when I'm away from it."

The man swung about and glanced nervously at the changing landscape, and then suddenly turned back again and exhibited a pocket volume with flexible covers.

"Dante's Inferno," he declared, pointing to

the book. "Ever delve into it? I've just recently been through a little inferno of my own," he went on. "I brought this with me, because I've got to keep before my mind the fact that some people have gone through more than I have. At least, so it seems to me. At the same time, I don't know that I'm ready to change places with any of the chaps in here." He tapped the book. "Neat little volume," he commented, rattling on nervously and without apparently keeping much track of what he was saying. "See the frontispiece," he said, leaning over towards Beekman. "It's Dante himself. I wonder why he always wears that headgear? Never see him without it! Always reminds me of a little verse on how to tell the names of busts.

"'I recognise Dante because he's tab-eared.' Tab-eared, you know," he went on, "is his peculiar sort of headgear. All sculptors give it to him." He resumed in sing-song fashion:

> "'I recognise Dante, because he's tab-eared,
> And Virgil I know by his wreath,
> Old Homer I tell by his rough, shaggy beard,
> And the rest—*by the names underneath.*'"

Beekman laughed aloud.

"Good! Mighty good!" he cried. "Especially 'and the rest by the names underneath.' A flash of genius that."

The man turned over several pages in his book and began to read steadily, rumpling his hair, from time to time, as he did so. Once he looked up, only to find Beekman staring hard at the top of his head.

"Looking at my Heidelberg scar?" he asked hastily, pulling a lock of hair over it. "It was an ugly one, I can tell you, and almost did for me, too. Sometimes, you know I've thought it dented me a little in the skull." He pushed back the hair, again exhibiting the long, deep cut. "It throbs there once in a while—it's throbbing now."

His conversation became incoherent, and from it Beekman gathered only snatches.

"I don't know how to go about it," he continued, as though talking to himself. "It's the taxes chiefly. If I can get rid of the tax sales, that farm is just the thing for me. Old farm," he explained, looking up at Beekman, "somewhere in Erie County. Thought I'd take a look at it. Been in the family for years, but neglected it; now I want to live on it, bury myself, get away from New York, from the Inferno back to Eden, don't you know."

He laughed a quick, nervous laugh, and jerked himself away once more, his face twitching while he mumbled.

"A man labouring under some strange and

unusual excitement," thought Beekman, "and yet. . . ."

The stranger was on his feet now, and going down the aisle paused before a chair that was occupied by a tired mother and her two-and-a-half-year-old child. Weary, mortified, her temper gone, the woman was trying to appease the crying babe.

Taking up the child in his arms, the stranger sat it on his knee, let it play with his watch, rattled his keys, adopted a hundred lively pranks for the benefit of the child; and the infant, soothed and cheered by this new and agreeable personality, sank at last into a peaceful sleep.

"Nothing like a child," he said to Beekman, "to make the future seem worth while. Talk about Eden—there's no Eden, no happiness, without them. I love children, this one, all of them."

Beekman once more lapsed into drowsiness, his thoughts, in a confused way, resting on the eccentric character beside him. When he awoke the train was pulling into Buffalo. Touching the stranger by the arm, as he was preparing to alight, he quoted: "'And the rest by the names underneath.'" And added, as he raised his hat: "Thanks. I'll not forget that."

Nor did he soon forget it. For indeed through many months to come he carried with him the

memory of that nervous, haunted, tired face with the restless, hopeless eyes, the memory of this unknown man with the scar deep and long and wide upon his forehead—the scar from Heidelberg.

At ten o'clock that morning Peter V. Wilkinson was closeted with Colonel Morehead in Colonel Morehead's office at 120 Broadway.

"Glad you left that Flomerfelt proposition downstairs, Peter," said Morehead, "because, for one thing, I don't like him."

"Well, I do," retorted Wilkinson positively. "As a matter of fact, I like him because I can't get along without him. He's a wonder!" he went on enthusiastically. "Any time you want a thing put through, and don't care how it's done, you hire my man Flomerfelt. In this whole crisis, Flomerfelt, in my opinion, is worth his weight in gold. Why, the man has a hold on nearly everybody that I know."

"Well, he hasn't one on me," returned the lawyer.

"He has on me, then," said his client, "but I don't mind. He gets good pay from me; and he can make any given man do almost anything he wants him to do—that's Flomerfelt. I never stop thanking my good fortune that I've got him on my side. He's the kingpin in this mix-up, let me tell you, Morehead."

The Colonel laughed.

"I was inclined to think, Peter, that I might be some pumpkins myself," he suggested. "I may be before we're through."

"No use of talking," protested his client, "Flomerfelt can do things that you can't do, and never thought of doing. If I get out of this scrape, it will be Flomerfelt's doing. . . ."

The lawyer leaned back in his revolving chair. He was a lean personage, all bone and gristle, with a lean nose and shrewd, sharp eyes.

"Peter," he said, "a bunch of indictments for perjury, larceny and forgery are dangerous things." He looked at his watch. "Confound it!" he went on. "Why the dickens couldn't the Court agree to take our plea at ten this morning. By eleven everybody in town will know about it, everybody that can will be there. If the papers hadn't got on to it early this morning we'd have had no trouble. We could have slipped in and out—done the trick, and nobody the wiser. But now . . . By the way," he added, "that reminds me—I want that man Beekman over here. I'll call him up."

Eliot Beekman's office said he was out—said he was not in New York—that he'd left that morning on the Empire State Express for Buffalo.

"Well, where is he in Buffalo?" asked Morehead.

They told him—at the Iroquois Hotel.

"Tell him that Colonel Morehead called him up," said the Colonel; "and that I want to see him the minute he returns."

Wilkinson nervously tapped his foot upon the floor.

"I can't see what you want of Beekman?" he said.

Morehead's eyes narrowed.

"I want him to defend you, if these indictments come to trial, as probably they shall."

"What! That young fellow who calls at my house to see Leslie!" returned Wilkinson. "Why, we want the highest-priced counsel we can get. I want you, and Patrick Durand, but not one of the submerged like Beekman."

"I want to tell you that Beekman isn't one of the submerged, as you say. He's got a practice here that yields him at least seventy-five hundred a year, which means that he's a wonderful man, because he's only thirty, or a little under, with no political pull. He makes his living out of the law pure and simple, not out of Wall Street, or real estate deals, or the criminal classes, either."

"Well, then, if he's not a criminal lawyer, we certainly do not want him," protested the Colonel's rich client.

"I like Beekman," proceeded the Colonel, ig-

noring the comment, "because, in a measure, he reminds me of myself, though he has something that I never had. Like me, he's a free lance. He never hooked up in partnership with anybody. When he tries a case he does it as I do—not with his associate holding his hand on one side and a couple of assistants holding his hand on the other—but alone with a couple of scraps of paper, and the rest of his case in his head. I like Beekman first-rate." He hitched his chair close to Wilkinson's. "But that isn't the point. The gist of the whole thing is this: There's one thing that Beekman can do better than any other lawyer in New York; one thing that he can do that most lawyers can't do at all. He is able to impress his jury with his own absolute belief in his client's cause. He's sincere, and the jury know it. And that's three-quarters of the battle. Oh, we'll all be there, Peter, on the show-down, but you can imagine me trying to impress a jury with my belief in my client's honesty, can't you? Oh, yes, my cleverness is conceded; they'd all laugh, and say, 'Strike one for the Colonel,' and all that sort of thing. But ten chances to one they'd find the other way. I wish I had that strange thing that Beekman has got! All my life I've wanted it."

Wilkinson fidgeted about. He didn't see this as the Colonel did. Nevertheless he answered:

"What you say goes, Morehead!"

The Colonel jerked his head and became the least bit more confidential.

"But the trick is to be sure that Beekman actually does believe in you. But, Peter, we're fortunate in one respect—I would have retained him anyway—but this development is certainly fortuitous: He wants to marry your daughter Leslie."

Wilkinson's face reddened; his Van Dyke bristled with opposition.

"I'd like to see him get the chance!" he cried. "Leslie has got to marry well, and she's just the hard-headed little girl who'll do it, too. Beekman marry Leslie! Not if I know it!"

The lawyer sank back wearily.

"The question of who marries your daughter, Wilkinson, is no concern of mine. That Beekman wants to marry her, is enough for me. Let him want to—let him see her all he wants to—you can fix the ultimate proceedings in your own way. But for the present, somebody has got to build up in Beekman a great and immovable faith in you. He must be educated up to the belief that you are as straight as a string. Let his teacher be the girl; she'll make the best one, for she believes in you herself."

Wilkinson pressed his hand against his face.

"And she's always got to believe in me," he groaned. "We must see to that."

The Colonel gripped his arm.

"And whatever happens, Peter," he concluded, "I don't want Beekman ever to meet this man Giles Ilingsworth, for he's another of your honest chaps; and if Beekman before your trial should hear from the lips of Giles Iiingsworth his own story of the case, he's going to believe it. Do you understand?" The lawyer grinned, adding: "For I believe it myself."

Fifteen minutes later a Mastodon turned into Franklin Street from Broadway and rolled easily down the hill toward the Criminal Courts Building, next door to the Tombs. In the car were four men: Peter V. Wilkinson, Colonel Morehead, his counsel; Roy Pallister, Wilkinson's private secretary, and Wilkinson's chauffeur.

"Great guns!" cried Wilkinson when they were half-way down the street; "look at the crowds! Why, everybody in New York is here!"

"I heard on the street this morning," said Morehead, who rather enjoyed his client's discomfiture, "that the disgruntled depositors had deserted the front doors of the Interstate and the Tri-State, and had formed here, waiting to see you——"

Morehead got no further, for at that moment the car abruptly stopped, as if on the brink of a precipice. A dirty fist was thrust into the car, and an extra shoved into their faces.

WILKINSON WARNED!

RUMOURS RIFE THAT THE CROWD AT CRIMINAL COURT WILL TRY TO KILL——

"Stop the car! Stop the car!" called out Wilkinson frantically. "Look at that murderous gang down there! Go back—go back! Turn the other way—turn the car around, do you hear?"

Morehead held up his hand.

"It's all right, Francois. Go ahead!" he commanded. "Go right ahead and nobody will notice us. We'll go in by the rear entrance; most of the crowd are in front. There are four automobiles there already; they've probably mistaken others for us. The crowd don't know you, Wilkinson, from Adam—wouldn't know you from your pictures in the papers. Besides, there's no danger; there never is, with a New York crowd. Drive on!"

The chauffeur obeyed him.

Now they were on the outskirts of the crowd, and had begun slowly to eat their way through it when, all of a sudden, somebody set up a cry of "Wilkinson!" But quick as a flash, Morehead leaned over the side of the car and shouted to the nearest of the mob:

"Has Wilkinson arrived?"

The answer was "No!" And at once word passed quickly that the car did not contain Wil-

kinson, but somebody else. Nevertheless, to Wilkinson's fearful eye there was a movement here, there, everywhere, as if the crowd, or some few people in it, had realised the truth.

Presently Morehead caught sight of two officers standing on the steps. To these the Colonel waved an unseen signal, while on the sidewalk Wilkinson's faithful Pinkertons waited, alert, quiet, their hands in their coat pockets.

And so it happened that the Mastodon managed to draw up at the curb before a spacious door, the two officers moving out to meet it, the Pinkertons flanking it on the other side.

"All we have to do, you see," said Colonel Morehead, "is to make a dash behind these uniforms, and a second more and we're inside. The crowd will be fooled."

But the crowd was not fooled. For suddenly there rose upon the air a mighty cry as if from a thousand throats:

"Wilkinson! Wilkinson! He's here! He's here! This way! This way! There's Wilkinson!" A moment's silence, and then more cries of. "Thief! Forger! Perjurer! My money — me back my money! . . . Arg-gh . . . !"

"Now, Wilkinson," whispered the Colonel, "keep a stiff upper lip; don't turn a hair. Just get out of the car and walk right through. I

know crowds—nothing will happen—nothing. Now . . ."

Colonel Morehead was a man whose orders were generally obeyed. Consequently, in a situation like this, his reassuring words carried great weight, and the men with him in the car, immediately following his example, jumped to their feet. For an instant they stood, exposed to merciless hootings, preparing to alight; and in that very instant there suddenly rang out a revolver shot, and a puff of smoke floated over the densest part of the crowd, while almost simultaneously, one of the four men in the car, clutching first at the air and then at his throat, plunged head foremost into the street below. Just how it happened the police never knew, but all remembered hearing a voice cry out: "Wilkinson!"

For a moment that seemed hours, the trained Pinkertons failed to rise to the emergency, but then fairly leaping into the machine and dragging the men across the sidewalk, they thrust them into the safety within the hall and closed the doors on them. Out again and into the street dashed the Pinkertons with the two uniformed officers, and there they picked up the body which was lying hideously huddled between the curb and the machine. As for Francois the chauffeur, he had fled.

"Get back there! Get back there!" cried the

officers. "If you don't, we'll pull our clubs. Get back! Will you get back . . . !"

But the frenzied crowd would not budge. So the officers, with their backs to the machine, plied their clubs viciously about them, but even then the mob persisted.

"It served him right! He got what was coming to him!" came from all sides.

"Get back!" cried the officers, standing guard over the body on the sidewalk. Gently one of them felt of the dead man, opening his clothing at the neck, felt of his heart. Now the officers shook their heads. A man came running through the crowd. "I'm a doctor," he told them; "anything I can do?" He, too, applied the tests. Presently he finished and rose to his feet, and announced:

"He's dead—dead as a door nail."

The policemen carried the body into the huge building and laid it down upon the stones.

"Great heavens! It's little Pallister."

The exclamation fell from the lips of Peter V. Wilkinson as he clutched at Colonel Morehead for support. A moment later, wiping the perspiration from his face, he added:

"And they meant that for me!"

VIII

DESPITE the efforts of his counsel to pacify him, it was fully half an hour before Peter V. Wilkinson recovered from his fright. Over and over again he wailed in the lawyer's ears, "But they tried to do it, Morehead. They tried to kill me, didn't they?" And when, at last, the replies to this question were not forthcoming, he asked, between little fits of shivering, what plans had been made to get him away, since the police would probably be powerless to drive away the crowd which every moment, he was positive, was increasing because of the excitement and their knowledge now that he was in the building. In a measure, however, he was soon reassured. For after a loud rap on the railing, the Court came in, and glancing commiseratingly at Colonel Morehead, as if apologising for an act of violence, he shot out a stern forefinger towards the officers and cried out in a sonorous tone:

"Clear the court-room at once! Next thing you know we'll have violence here."

This proceeding took some little time, for the court-room was crowded. When at last it was cleared the Court, bowing respectfully to Colonel Morehead, announced:

"If you're ready, Colonel Morehead, we'll have the indictments read."

The Colonel made a grimace.

"We've been reading them all night, your Honour; I know them all by heart; I think we can waive having them read."

"Put the waiver on the record," said the Assistant District Attorney to the stenographer. He nodded toward the Court. "The District Attorney is most particular about this case."

"How do you plead to the first, Colonel?" asked the Court.

"The larceny indictment?"

"Yes."

"Not guilty."

"Forgery—eight counts there, Colonel."

"Not guilty."

"Perjury—these banking reports—how about it?"

"Not guilty," repeated Morehead laconically. "And now, your Honour," he went on, adopting a casual tone, "about bail?"

The Court inclined his head toward the Assistant District Attorney.

"Any suggestions?"

"I move, your Honour," said the assistant, "that bail in these cases,—under the new rule laid down in the Mitchell case,—be fixed at two hundred and fifty thousand dollars on each charge."

Colonel Morehead stiffened as with a sudden shock.

"Your Honour," he protested, "this is preposterous! Every defendant is entitled to have bail fixed at a reasonable sum."

"Then," went on the assistant with asperity, "if Colonel Morehead makes a fuss about it, I move, your Honour, to hold this defendant in the Tombs, and without bail, if your Honour please. It is, in this case, discretionary with your Honour. People vs. Mitchell, 193 New York."

His Honour nodded impartially to Colonel Morehead and the Assistant District Attorney.

For a while he gazed into space; finally he said:

"Colonel Morehead, I think that I must fix the bail suggested, if I fix any bail at all."

"This is barbarous, prohibitive, unconstitutional," groaned Morehead. "Why, your Honour, it is a notorious fact that my client is a broken man. [illegible]cially. Where can he get three-quarters of a [illegible]ion bail?"

The Court's eyes sought the rear wall. He had often dined with Wilkinson, had been entertained at his house, but this made no difference to the Court.

"I think, Colonel," he repeated, this time with a shade more emphasis, "that I must fix the bail suggested, if I am to fix any bail at all."

Wilkinson, the present calamity fresh upon him,

was trembling; and pressing against Colonel Morehead, whispered loudly in his ear:

"Let it go at three-quarters of a million, Colonel; we can raise that easy enough."

The Colonel turned white with rage. He looked at the Assistant District Attorney to see if that gentleman had heard the remark. Then, satisfied that he had not, he turned swiftly and ostentatiously upon his client, protesting:

"Mr. Wilkinson, I am managing this case, not you. Be good enough to let me manage it alone." Before proceeding, he wiped his glasses and blinked his eyes. "Your Honour," he said with considerable pathos in his tone, "to fix this bail means that my client must be incarcerated in the Tombs. Who among all his friends will come forward to-day and furnish three-quarters of a million dollars bail? Who, indeed?" He shook his head. "Blessed are they that hath, for to them shall be given. But to him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that he hath. Does your Honour still persist?"

"Colonel Morehead," said the Court, "I shall cheerfuly hold this man without bail at all, if you still persist."

Morehead bowed.

"We shall try . . ." and his voice rang with the wail of a funeral bell, "we shall try to get bail, your Honour."

"You ca.. furnish it now?" asked the Court.

"You might as well ask for the moon," returned Wilkinson's counsel, looking the picture of grim despair.

The Court's eyelids never fluttered as he ordered:

"Take the prisoner to the Tombs in default of bail."

"I'll go with you, Wilkinson," declared Morehead, with a peculiar smile.

As they crossed the Bridge of Sighs, they could hear the cries of the crowd below—a crowd frenzied both by the horror of the crime and the escape of Wilkinson.

"Don't be frightened, Wilkinson, this is all right," said Morehead soothingly. "You're going to stay in the Tombs until I get you bail."

"I can put it up in half an hour, you fool!" insisted Wilkinson.

"But you won't," returned his counsel. "Not if I know it. If you put up bail in half an hour, they'll find out where it comes from; and if they find that out, they'll find out all the rest."

Wilkinson dropped his eyes.

"Perhaps you're right, Colonel," he conceded. "Do with me as you will."

"Yes, you must do as I say, or I'll drop this case," warned the Colonel. "And while you're

in here, you're not to talk—not a word to anyone—do you understand me?"

"But how long will I be in here? They won't lock me up, will they?"

"Of course they will."

"Not behind the bars—not in a cell?"

Morehead nodded.

"I won't stand for it!" blustered the millionaire.

Morehead caught him by the arm and looked him in the eye.

"You've got to do as I say to the letter, or it means ruin, ruin, do you understand? I know what I'm talking about. You go into a cell without a murmur. The newspapers—all New York will talk about it; everybody will know that Colonel Morehead is gnashing his teeth at the injustice shown you. Morehead is taking an appeal, they will say; but as for you, you'll keep quiet in your cage until I let you out. It won't be long; wait and see."

They passed into the Tombs. A deputy warden nodded to Wilkinson.

"That was a narrow escape you had, Mr. Wilkinson," he said, referring to the tragedy of an hour or so before.

"I—I should think so," faltered Wilkinson, the cold sweat running down his face. "Poor Pallister! Have they got the murderer?"

"No," said the warden, "and I doubt if they'll ever get him, either. Still, you never can tell. . . ."

"If they should find out, you'll let me know at once, won't you?" urged Wilkinson.

The warden promised. The lawyer and his client parted: Colonel Morehead went his way; Wilkinson was shown into a cell.

At one o'clock that day, one of the officials unlocked the door of his cell and took him down into a counsel room. Sitting there at a table was a woman with her face in her hands.

"Oh, father, I couldn't stay away!" she cried, springing to her feet and smiling bravely.

"Leslie—you here—you!" And the next moment he had gathered her in his arms and was patting the head that rested on his shoulders.

"I'm so glad to see you, that you're alive and well," she went on affectionately. "Colonel Morehead told me——"

"What's Morehead doing?" broke in her father, putting her gently from him.

"Turning my stocks and bonds into cash, or getting a surety company bond on them, I don't know which. Isn't it lucky, father, that I had enough—more than enough to help you out? The Colonel says you may have to stay here two or three nights . . ."

Wilkinson was beside himself.

"I won't—I won't stay here," he raged. "I'll take the risk——"

"What risk?" she asked wonderingly.

Her father sobered.

"Oh, Leslie, I—I don't know what I'm saying. Don't mind me—I'm unnerved, overwrought. Poor Pallister . . ."

Leslie burst into tears.

"Yes, poor, poor Roy," she murmured. "It was awful—simply awful! I was so fond of him, father. He was always so kind, so thoughtful and considerate, and devoted to your interests, wasn't he, father?"

Wilkinson merely inclined his head, contenting himself with patting her hand and saying:

"There, there, my girl, don't cry."

For, truth to tell, he was much too taken up with a consideration of his own affairs to have any time for other people's troubles, much less mourn over Roy Pallister, though, in his way, he was undoubtedly fond of the little chap. However, after Leslie had calmed down sufficiently to talk connectedly once more, he not only listened, but approved of the girl's suggestion that she offer a reward, a large reward for the discovery of the perpetrator of the dastardly crime.

"Yes, I must know," he said to himself when once more alone in his cell. "Flomerfelt must find out who fired that shot. Flomerfelt will

find out. . . . What would I do without him?"

But the question would surely not have been asked had it been possible for him to have overheard the conversation that took place, later, between Mrs. Peter Wilkinson and his confidential man.

As Flomerfelt entered the house, Mrs. Peter V. Wilkinson was waiting for him.

Flomerfelt was visibly excited. He removed his gloves and fell to pacing lightly up and down the room.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Mrs. Peter V.

Flomerfelt stopped before her, his white lips drawn tightly against his teeth.

"My, what a chance for an enemy in that big mob; and what a fumble!"

"Were you there?" she asked.

Flomerfelt shrugged his shoulders.

"Trouble is something that I sidestep. I expected trouble and stayed away."

"You expected this?" The woman looked at him incredulously.

"Wilkinson feared it, too, I think."

"Why?"

"The depositors—the mob——"

"Was it one of the depositors who—who killed Pallister?"

"How should I know?" And again he shrugged his shoulders, eyed his coat-sleeves and his lean wrists, for his cuffs, obeying some unwritten law, had crept up and out of sight. He jerked his arms again, and his linen darted once more into view. Again he scrutinised it carefully, first glancing upon his right hand and then upon his left.

Mrs. Peter V. eyed him closely.

"Doesn't anybody know who fired the shot?"

He shook his head.

"Some believe the depositors did it; others a personal enemy. Wilkinson feared treachery, I think. A reward is being offered—a rather large reward, I think—ten thousand dollars."

The question, "By whom?" hung on her lips, but was interrupted by Flomerfelt, who went on with:

"It was Leslie's idea, I understand. She is beside herself—wants to avenge Pallister."

"Sorry about him myself," said Mrs. Peter V., seemingly sincere. It was only when she added, "He certainly knew how to hook up waists," that the shallowness of the woman's mind was evident. And even Flomerfelt recoiled from her when, a moment later, she motioned to him to seat himself by her side.

"Who shot at Wilkinson?" she asked, persistently, drawing him closer to her.

Flomerfelt dismissed the subject with a wave of the hand.

"As we remarked, it makes but little difference now. The shot went wild."

At six o'clock that night, Eliot Beekman dined at the Iroquois Hotel in Buffalo with J. K. Witheridge, cashier of the Bank Le Boeuf.

"You were so successful, Mr. Beekman," said the cashier, when coffee and cigars had arrived, "with that hopeless Cantrell nix-up of ours in New York, that we thought we would give you a harder nut to crack. This time our claim is for $50,000, if it's a cent."

Beekman pricked up his ears. This was worth a hurried trip to Buffalo and no mistake.

"Against whom is your claim?" he asked.

"One reason why we wanted to see you personally," the cashier went on to explain, "is because there seems to be a good deal of secrecy involved in this thing. Our claim is against the Tri-State Trust Company—our funds on deposit there. We want to get them back."

"You stand a small chance . . ." quickly spoke up Beekman. "In my opinion, Tri-State won't pay three per cent."

"Admitting all that," conceded the cashier, "it's not the Tri-State Trust Company that I want you to tackle, I want you to find its funds."

"Funds? It hasn't any!"

"Of course it hasn't, but we're satisfied—and other banks are satisfied—that somebody's got its funds. And the fellow that gets in first and right, is going to get his claim paid in full. That's why we sent for you. The man we've got to fight is Peter V. Wilkinson."

"Peter V. Wilkinson!" echoed the other. "And you say he's——"

"We claim he's bagged the spoils."

Beekman laughed outright.

"Why, man, he's smashed—ruined! He hasn't got a dollar to his name. I know him."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. And I'll tell you where I think you're off the track. His daughter has money—money of her own. It came from her mother—Wilkinson's first wife. I have no doubt that all these rumours about Wilkinson's cash,—although this is the first I've heard about it,—come from the fact that his daughter has money."

"Pshaw! She has less than a million dollars—we have the facts on that. We're not thinking about that; we believe Wilkinson has got upwards of fifty millions packed away."

Again Beekman laughed.

"If you were in New York you wouldn't say that. Everybody there knows that Wilkinson is a wreck."

"Nevertheless we have our theory. We're willing to pay the shot," declared Witheridge. "Now, is there any reason why I shouldn't go on—tell you the rest—the confidential details? In other words, Mr. Beekman, is there any reason why you should not take up this case and probe Wilkinson to the finish?"

Beekman thought for a while, weighing carefully the other's words. There was reputation in this thing; moreover, he felt that it would do Wilkinson no harm, for he was convinced of Wilkinson's honesty of purpose. He saw no reason why honest business should be refused. More than that, this Bank Le Boeuf had, in times past, employed him as its counsel, and all through dinner Witheridge had been pouring praises in his ear.

"I hope you can take it," pressed Witheridge, "for to tell you the truth, there's nobody in New York that we'd rather have than you. We've that much confidence in you . . ."

But Beekman still balked.

"If I take this case, I needn't assure you, Mr. Witheridge, that you may depend on me. The only reason why I hesitate is because I know the man's daughter. But once I decide to take the case . . ."

At that moment a waiter laid down an evening paper before Beekman; he glanced at it, revolv-

ing the proposition the while in his mind. Suddenly he started and cried out:

"Great Scott! The man we're talking about—shot . . ."

"Killed?" gasped Witheridge.

"No—it's his private secretary that was killed." And with his eyes still on the paper, "No, wait. There's more. Wilkinson is held in three-quarter of a million bail. I heard this morning that he was indicted, but I never expected—— And, Cæsar's ghost! They've locked him up in the Tombs and in default of bail. That's rough!"

"My dear Beekman," grinned Witheridge, "don't you see that it's all a game—all but the killing? Say that you'll take the case, then I can go on—tell you the rest."

But whatever would have been Eliot's decision at that moment, he was not permitted to give it utterance. For just then he heard some one calling out his name; and, glancing up, he saw a boy approaching him with a telegram in his hand.

"Mr. Beekman?" asked the boy.

Beekman took the message, which said:

ELIOT BEEKMAN, ESQ.,
Hotel Iroquois, Buffalo, N. Y.

You are retained in People vs. Wilkinson as counsel for defence. Take the first train for New York.

MORRHEAD.

After grasping its contents, Beekman quickly passed it over to his host with the one word: "Read." And then he added:

"This is a retainer, Mr. Witheridge, that I cannot very well refuse. You see," he was smiling now, "I know his daughter."

IX

TEN men crowded into the office of Assistant District Attorney Leech, ten men of various sizes and complexions, ten men upon whom sat undoubted respectability, and yet in whose eyes gleamed a gnawing anxiety—a strange excitement.

A deputy assistant district attorney—or a d. a. d. a., as they call them there, received the delegation coldly.

"What in thunder is this mob doing here?" he asked.

The ten men nodded toward their spokesman; he leaned against the d. a. d. a.'s desk.

"Chief clerk sent us here," he said.

"What about?" asked his cross-examiner.

The spokesman drew from his pocket a folded paper and opened it wide for the other to read.

"Ten Thousand Dollars Reward for information leading to the Conviction of the Murderer of Roy Pallister," is what he read, after which the d. a. d. a. looked at it curiously, and added: "Well? What then?"

"Well," said the spokesman, as the ten men crowded closely about him, "we've got information—see?"

"What information?"

For answer he drew forth a weapon—an ugly-looking weapon: a hammerless revolver, with one chamber empty.

The d. a. d. a. sniffed with some excitement.

"Where did you get it?" he demanded. Surreptitiously he nodded to a uniformed attendant, who as surreptitiously shut the door and locked it.

"Picked it up the day young Pallister was killed," went on the spokesman, "picked it up where the man that used it left it lying—when he ran away."

The assistant glanced at him sharply.

"Why didn't you pass it over right away?" he demanded.

The ten men shrugged their shoulders, but it was their spokesman who explained:

"In that crowd," he returned slowly, "there was too much excitement already. These here saw me pick it up, and we talked about it—talked about it slow and cold. We didn't want to be mobbed ourselves, even by the cops; we didn't want to be taken for the murderer—you understand? So we closed in around this gun, y'see, and we kept it close, till now." He grinned sheepishly. "Besides," he added, "our savings has been lost in the Tri-State Trust, and we was kind o' waitin' for somethin' of this kind," he pointed

to the advertised reward, "thinking maybe we could even up somehow, y'see."

"I see," returned the assistant, grimly. "I see that you had no right to wait an instant when you got this thing in your fist." He waved his hand. "Never mind that now, but tell me who did the killing. Did you know the man?"

The ten men shook their heads.

"We seen no man," one blurted out, "a hand —that's all I see."

"That's all we see," assented the spokesman, looking to his fellows for affirmance, "a hand and a shot. It was all so quick. We asked everybody; nobody seen anything—just a hand and a shot, that's all."

The assistant frowned.

"Do you suspect who did it?" he interrogated.

Blankly they shook their heads.

The d. a. d. a. shot out a forefinger.

"Tell me about that mass meeting of the savings depositors held the night before the murder?" he demanded, at a venture.

They returned his query with a stare.

"There wasn't any mass meeting that we know of," they said.

He rapped upon the table and nodded to the uniformed attendant.

"You know what to do," he said.

Evidently the attendant did; for after a short

space of time he unlocked the door, and six plain-clothes-men pounced upon the spokesman.

"But I didn't do it!" yelled the big man who had handed over the ferocious-looking gun.

"He didn't do it!" cried the other men behind.

"Aw, come on!" said the officer of the law, "we'll lock the whole kit an' boodle of you up as witnesses. What—you won't? Come on—Come on!"

"But don't you forget that we furnished information," called back the spokesman, "that may lead to the conviction of somebody, and when that happens, we want that ten, y'see?"

It was not long before the news of the discovery of the pistol became known. So that when Leslie arrived on a visit to her father, and asked an officer if there had been any developments in regard to her advertisement in the paper, she was answered in the affirmative.

"Father, dear," she cried, excitedly, when they were alone, "listen to me. I can't sleep to-night unless it can be arranged for me to see that pistol that was found. I have a fancy that——" She stopped short.

"A fancy—what?" he demanded suddenly.

"That I may have seen it once before," she continued.

Wilkinson called an officer.

The officer took Leslie across the bridge and

into the other part of the building where the pistol was to be seen. Its custodian watched the girl narrowly as she looked upon it; but she gave no sign.

"I don't believe I ever saw that one before," she volunteered.

Back again with her father, she whispered eagerly in his ear:

"Father, oh, father, what am I to do? That gun there is the very gun that Giles Ilingsworth had in our house that day. It's the same—the very same, I'm sure of it. What am I to do?"

Wilkinson uttered an oath under his breath.

"We'll give him up, that's what we'll do! We'll hunt him down!" he said excitedly. "He tried to kill me, and he did kill little Pallister."

He stood there staring at her, his face growing whiter all the time. He was about to speak again when he was interrupted by the entrance of Colonel Morehead.

Through the lawyer's mind, as he looked at Wilkinson and his daughter, a number of impressions were passing. The three days' confinement in a cell had left its traces on the multi-millionaire: a terrible depression was on him, his shoulders were hunched, and his eyes lustreless. With Leslie, of course, there was no such great change, though her lips were trembling, her eyes wide and searching, and her figure seemed shrunken. In

other words, the shadow of the Tombs was upon them all. All—the word is used advisedly, for Morehead, himself, was by no means in a normal condition. Veteran, though he unquestionably was, he had shivered as if with dread the moment he had crossed the threshold of the jail. Hundreds of times, it is true, he had passed in and out without let or hinderance, and yet upon every occasion this indescribable sense of dread—the clutch of terror, the stretching out of the cold, clammy hand of penal servitude, the horribly silent eloquence of bolt and bar—was ever present. Custom had not staled it; it bit into him with terrible force.

But whatever he felt, he gave no sign. To-day, as always, he had merely nodded to the door-man as he passed in, strode down the narrow passageway and pushed through the turn-stile. At that point, however, he had been confronted by the deputy warden of the jail.

"Counsellor," asked big Bill Steen with unaccustomed caution in his tone, "who was you looking for?"

The Counsellor smiled.

"You have only one of my birds shut up in your aviary, Bill. Obviously, he's the man I wish to see."

Big Bill nodded, still with suspicious caution.

"Peter V. Wilkinson, I suppose?"

"Precisely," returned the Colonel, and was starting on.

"One moment, Counsellor," went on the deputy, detaining him. "You an' me is old friends, and I don't want to hurt your feelings. But I have been warned by Murgatroyd. The District Attorney is most particular about this case." And a curious expression crossed his face, as he added: "You must admit, Counsellor, that we don't often have a guy locked up here—worth millions and charged with larceny, forgery and perjury, all at once, and who's waitin' for three-quarters of a million bail."

"No, it isn't an everyday occurrence, I acknowledge. Now, will you bring him down, or shall I go up to him?"

Again the deputy shook his head.

"Counsellor, District Attorney Murgatroyd says be careful, and I got to, even with an old friend like you. If there's any attempt at an escape,—and a man who's said to be worth millions and wants to get out of jail—well, sometimes, locks will turn and bars will break. I don't know that it would take so many millions to——"

Colonel Morehead looked straight into the eyes of big Bill Steen, with that confidential look which had won him many juries.

"Bill," he said, under his breath, "suppose he wasn't worth millions—only a fraction of a mil-

lion! And suppose he couldn't get bail! How much would you take, Bill, to let him go? How much? A hundred thousand, two hundred, a quarter of a million? Come—say the word."

The deputy indignantly drew away.

"Counsellor," he protested, "you couldn't touch me with ten million. I wouldn't let him off for that."

Morehead's smile was not a pleasant one.

"Steen," he went on severely, "you'll let him off for less. Oh, yes, yes you will; I know all about you, one hour won't pass before you'll be sending a man upstairs to let Wilkinson out. Come, call it a hundred and fifty thousand. . . . No? Then two . . . two and a half——"

"Not on your life!" returned Steen, raising a deprecating hand.

Colonel Morehead fixed his hypnotic eye upon the other, drew himself up to his full height, thrust his hand into his breast-pocket, pulled out a paper, and held it under the nose of Steen.

"Look at that, Bill," he insisted, "and see whether my prophecy comes true."

The deputy warden opened the paper, glanced at it and grinned.

"Quit your kiddin', Counsellor! Why didn't you say all along that you'd given bail?"

"You can send it to your friend Murgatroyd,"

concluded Morehead, "and make sure it's O. K. I'll go up to Wilkinson."

Colonel Morehead, on leaving the warden, was suddenly conscious of a feeling or disgust. With an effort, however, he shook it off, and there was a semblance, at least, of a smile on his face when he appeared, as has been said, before Wilkinson and his daughter in the counsel room.

"They're going to let you out, Peter," he announced, seating himself at a table and squaring his elbows, "and right away."

"I thought they never would," was Wilkinson's answer. "These three days have seemed more like three years to me. . . . So you got it through, did you? Surety Company fix it up . . . ?"

"I got the Court to reduce the bail to half a million; your daughter Leslie and the Surety Company did the rest."

Leslie started.

"I! Why I didn't know that I did anything?"

Colonel Morehead smiled.

"You assigned two-thirds of your own fortune —stocks and bonds—to the surety company to secure them. So if Peter V. skips his bail—runs away,"—he was leering at him now,—"you stand to lose, you see."

"Runs away," repeated Leslie. The words were like music to her ears. "What a splendid

idea! It would be the best way out of it, after all. You could take the *Marchioness,*" she went on enthusiastically, "and steam to the ends of the earth!"

"Haven't I told you, Colonel, that she was a hard-headed little proposition," said her father, with a good deal of pride. "Not a bad idea, the *Marchioness.* Now, if—if I were guilty, instead of being innocent. . . ."

Colonel Morehead grunted.

"Do you think that your steam yacht the *Marchioness* is any match for District Attorney Murgatroyd? He'd find you even in uncharted seas, and bring you back."

"It's all O. K., Counsellor," called out Bill Steen, tapping on the door; "you can go now!"

Steen unlocked the door of the dingy little room. And as Peter Wilkinson started to go, Steen intercepted him and held out his hand, hesitated a moment, and finally said:

"It ain't often that we have a man of your standing, Mr. Wilkinson, in our hotel. Would you mind a-shakin' hands before you go?"

Wilkinson shook hands with a will.

"Here's hoping that we may never see you here again," said Steen, cordially.

"You can be sure of that," answered Wilkinson, with just the ghost of a smile on his lips. At the entrance he stood an instant and looked up

into the sky. "Free," he breathed, as to himself. Leslie clung to his arm, and pressed her hand against her face. They started down the steps, but Wilkinson drew back.

"The crowds—the crowds—they'll mob me again!" he cried, his huge frame shaking like a leaf.

Morehead caught him firmly by the arm.

"Come, Peter, brace up, take a big grip on yourself!" were his reassuring words. "There's no mob, no one who knows you, anyhow. You don't look so different from a lot of other men."

Wilkinson shook himself and clenched his hands.

"I'm all right now," he declared, "I lost my nerve in there." After a long intake of breath, he added: "That's the last time they'll ever get me in there, the last time, mark my words, Morehead. There were times when I came near biting the bars. Think of me being locked up!" They had reached the corner of the street. He halted. "There was a chap in the cell next to mine," he went on, "who'd been sent up for five years. Think of it! He was waiting to be taken up the river any day—didn't seem to mind it, either. Five years in a place like that——"

"The machine's around on Lafayette Street," interrupted the Colonel. "I thought it better. . . ."

"Right," declared Wilkinson. "But we don't need it yet."

Leslie turned to Colonel Morehead; her eyes were bright, her cheeks red with excitement.

"Why did my father have to stay in there; can you tell me that?" she asked.

"The bail was stupendous. I had arranged for reasonable bail; but this was unusual," the Colonel explained. "But that's not all—the surety companies had been warned."

"Warned! Did you say warned not to give bail when they were secured?" she cried.

"Warned," repeated Morehead, "not to furnish bail without being sure that they were secure."

"Who warned them?" echoed Wilkinson, incredulous.

"The *Morning Mail*," began the Colonel, but was interrupted by Wilkinson:

"Phew! And who owns the *Morning Mail?*"

Morehead smiled.

"Check and countercheck," he grinned. "Ougheltree and his gang have just bought it." Turning to Leslie, he explained that Ougheltree was the President of the Twentieth Century National Bank. "The National Banks have formed in line to fight the Trust Companies," he told her, "because the Trust Companies, having bigger powers, attract more people. And they've opened fire on your father, first, and his ring of Trust

Companies." And now once more he turned to Wilkinson, and laying his hand on the other's shoulder, he said: "Do you know what I was thinking just this morning? I think you ought to buy a daily paper. I do, indeed! This is a crisis——"

"But I already own a paper," objected Wilkinson.

"I mean a good one. My idea would be to buy —well, say the *Daily Reporter*. It's a crackerjack sheet that's just begun to go down hill. It can be bought cheap, too."

Leslie tightened her grasp on her father's arm.

"Let me buy it for you, father, that is, if there's money enough left to buy it with."

Morehead's attention was directed afresh toward Leslie.

"Let me go on, Miss Leslie," he continued. "There were other reasons why haste was inadvisable. The *Morning Mail*, owned by this gang of national bankers, is trying to poison public opinion against your father. If we had instantly snapped a bail bond of three-quarters of a million dollars on the files, the *Mail* would have charged Peter V. Wilkinson with being a rich man still, having the money of the masses in his coat-tail pocket. It was wise and necessary, too, for me to forestall this. I gave to every newspaper in the city the pedigree of the stocks and

bonds that you put up, showing that they were the individual property of your mother, and had come down to you direct. The result is that the *Morning Mail* had not a word to say. We've got to be mighty careful," he concluded, "about public opinion. For there's a trial waiting for us out there in the future."

There was determination in the girl's voice as she answered excitedly:

"And we'll win it, too!"

Wilkinson snorted.

"Of course we'll win!" he cried.

"We'll win," conceded Morehead, "but only after some shrewd counsellor-at-law—naming no names—has mapped out the campaign."

"That reminds me," said Wilkinson, "that we must put Flomerfelt on to this."

"Never mind Flomerfelt just now," advised Morehead. "Our first step is to buy a live newspaper and start in. And the first thing that's going to be chalked up to the methods of the *Morning Mail,* is the murderous mob that's responsible for the murder of Pallister three days ago."

They had started for Lafayette Street, but Wilkinson held them back.

"Who's going to try my case, Morehead?" he queried. "Which one of Murgatroyd's men?"

Colonel Morehead smiled enigmatically.

"Assistant District Attorney J. Newton Leech is the man. My information is direct—direct from the inside."

Wilkinson literally dragged them across the street.

"Come on," he said, "we'll go in and see Assistant District Attorney Leech right away."

Morehead interposed, and demanded:

"What for?"

"Just to—er—throw a sop to Cerberus," said Wilkinson. "Come, come along with me."

Wilkinson's cringing manner of a little while before had left him. His shoulders once more were straight, his Van Dyke belligerent. He had assumed his position as a leader of men.

"Both you and Leslie come along with me," he repeated. "I'm going to scratch Leech's back, and maybe, one of these days, he'll scratch mine."

They were ushered forthwith into the Assistant District Attorney's outer office. His private door was open, and they could hear his even voice within. His tones were mingled, however, with those of a woman—a pleading, tearful woman, judging from her voice. Wilkinson's card was sent in to Leech; and the instant that the Assistant District Attorney saw it, his straight lips widened into a pleasant smile. He came out to greet the three almost instantly, singled out Morehead and held out his hand.

"Colonel," he said in his sprightly and yet confidential manner, "mighty glad to see you." And now turning his gaze on Wilkinson, he added: "I'm afraid, Mr. Wilkinson, that you won't care to shake hands with me; but I assure you I won't bite—not just yet, at any rate."

Wilkinson shook hands warmly, and haw-hawed in a most approved and business-like manner. Leech now turned swiftly to Leslie, and then stopped, embarrassed.

"Miss Wilkinson," began Colonel Morehead.

"Mr. Leech, this is my daughter, Miss Wilkinson," said Peter V., snatching the words from the Colonel's mouth, and then without giving Leech the opportunity to make the usual acknowledgment, he hurriedly went on in a loud, commanding voice: "Now, Leslie, dear, I want you to tell Assistant District Attorney Leech of the threats that this man Ilingsworth made to you the other day."

"I beg your pardon," said Leech, stepping to the inner door and closing it quietly, for Wilkinson's words had brought an exclamation to the lips of the woman in the adjoining room, that had reached his ears. Leech came back almost instantly and placed chairs for them all.

"Tell him all you know, Leslie," commanded her father.

The girl's breath came quick and short. Her

father's words had come as a shock to her, and she looked about her helplessly.

"Father, I'd much prefer not," she protested.

Morehead did not altogether approve of the proceeding, chiefly because he had not been consulted upon it, and he interjected gravely:

"Are we sure, Mr. Wilkinson, that she knows anything of the affair?"

Wilkinson did not deign even to glance at his counsel, and ignoring the girl's protests, and brushing aside or rather pushing his way through her objections, as was his wont, with his shoulders, he repeated:

"Leslie, I want you to tell Assistant District Attorney Leech all that you know about this man Ilingsworth—all—you understand."

Leslie, with difficulty, controlled herself, and cried out:

"Father, this is a—a case of murder. I can't be the accuser. . . . Don't drag me into it—please. . . ."

A dull red, angry colour crept up over Wilkinson's collar, and his eyes flashed.

"Leslie, don't you understand what this man Ilingsworth has done He's killed my private secretary Pallister! It's your duty. . . . How are you going to escape . . .?"

Leech tiptoed back to the door of his private

office and gently closed the transom, which was open.

"In order to relieve you, Miss Wilkinson," he now said, and his voice was reassuring, "I may as well tell you that we have established, beyond all doubt, proofs of Ilingsworth's guilt. We have people who say they saw him in the crowd; we've found the man who sold him the gun, and we've shown him Ilingsworth's photograph, which he identifies as unquestionably the man."

"But you haven't got Ilingsworth?" quickly interposed Morehead.

"Not yet," and Leech fastened his eyes on Leslie. "Can you have any idea as to where he is?"

The three dissented silently.

"We'll get him yet," smiled Leech. "It is rare that we do not succeed in landing a person when once we start out to," he went on, his glance shifting to Wilkinson, who met it in open and genial defiance.

"You—you have time to hear what my daughter has to say?" asked Wilkinson, and without waiting for an answer, he added: "I think now is the time to take it down—and——"

Leech rose abruptly.

"Miss Wilkinson, you would know this man Ilingsworth, I suppose, if you saw him?"

"Yes," faltered Leslie, "I should know the

man. But his pictures in the daily papers—I should never have known him from those."

"Just a moment, until I get his photograph," whispered the Assistant District Attorney, opening the inside door; presently he returned, closing the door again behind him, and advancing towards them he resumed confidingly: "The fact is, I've got Ilingsworth's daughter inside there. I shouldn't be surprised if she knew where the old man is, either, though she insists that she does not, and——"

Wilkinson grunted.

"And you're practising third-degree tactics on her, I suppose," he said.

"Well, not exactly that, but persuasion—polite persuasion, that's all," explained the Assistant District Attorney, smiling. He stepped once more toward the inner door, and Leslie, obeying some hidden impulse, darted quickly to his side.

"Will you let me see her without being seen," she pleaded. "He told me all about her—her name is Elinor."

"Stand here, then," whispered Leech, and opening the door swiftly, he passed over to the window and held the girl within in conversation while he searched among his papers, and in such a manner that three-quarters of her countenance was turned toward Leslie. One glance at the pretty face of the girl was sufficient to satisfy Leslie that Elinor

Ilingsworth was in great distress, and taking her place beside her father, she whispered:

"Oh, father, you should see her. She's in great trouble, and yet she looks so—so pretty." Genuine anguish shone from Leslie's eyes as she now turned from her father to Colonel Morehead, and asked:

"Who's going to take care of her? What's to become of her now?"

Leech had returned by this time and was holding before Leslie a half-tone photograph of Giles Ilingsworth.

"That's the man!" cried Leslie, seizing the picture. She turned it over and glanced involuntarily at the inscription on the back. "Taken particularly for my daughter Elinor," it said. "Affectionately her father, G. I. Sept. 190——"

Leslie's eyes reproached Leech.

"You make this girl an instrument in her father's destruction," she said indignantly, little understanding what part she might play later in her own father's affairs.

Leech, who seemed to take a very business-like pleasure in feasting his eyes upon Leslie's face, merely nodded, and after a moment's silence he said:

"You forget, Miss Wilkinson, that we have our duty to perform. A man who murders is not entitled to so very much consideration, after all."

He looked at the photograph in her hand. "If you're sure that this is the man you know as Giles Ilingsworth, you might tell me briefly what he said. It is not vital," he went on hastily, "that is, we can make a case without it. But we want—and Mr. Wilkinson is good enough to offer——"

"Mr. Leech," broke in Wilkinson, seeking the Assistant District Attorney's glance, which he held to the end, "let me be understood. This man Ilingsworth killed a man in my employ—to be exact, my private secretary, my friend. I want to put myself on record here and now: Whenever a man tries to do me an injury, whenever a man tries to hound me—hound me, understand, as this man Ilingsworth did,"—he paused for an instant, —"his gun was aimed at me, don't you forget that—why, I camp on that man's trail until I land him. And conversely, if a man does me a favour," —again there was a pause to let the fact sink home,—"I never forget it. Now, Leslie," he concluded, "you may proceed with the facts, and tell us about the man who tried to kill your father in cold blood."

Leslie's recital consisted of the threats Ilingsworth had made. Wilkinson supplemented it with his statement as to the unwarranted attack on himself by Ilingsworth in front of Wilkinson's house on the Drive on that eventful evening a short while before. Leech took no notes of these state-

ments, but merely tucked away the details to be dictated to his stenographer later in the privacy of his inner room.

"That's all, Mr. Leech," said Wilkinson, rising, and, holding out his hand, the other shook it genially.

"By the way, who's going to try the Ilingsworth case for the People?" inquired Morehead, hoping to take the Assistant District Attorney off his guard.

"Nobody knows yet," snapped the Assistant District Attorney, in a manner to remind the Colonel gently but forcefully that it was nobody's business but the People's.

At the outer door, Leslie held them for a moment.

"If there was any way to," she faltered, "I'd like to know what's going to happen to—to that girl inside. I——"

Wilkinson winked at Morehead.

"Why, girlie," he exclaimed, "Ilingsworth's stolen millions will take care of her!"

Leslie brightened up.

"To be sure," she answered. "I—I never thought of that. I'd forgotten all about the fact that he had money still."

"He reeks with money," added Morehead, returning Wilkinson's wink. "And now, for the machine."

Twenty minutes later Wilkinson stalked into the presence of his wife and Beekman. It was late afternoon, and Beekman was to dine with them that night. Wilkinson bowed ostentatiously to Mrs. Wilkinson, and commented:

"Overpowered, my dear, absolutely overpowered by your attentions to me while I was in the Tombs. I actually felt like a bachelor again."

"How could any man expect a lady to go there?" she asked, glaring at Beekman, and evidently expecting him to come to her aid, but as no comment was forthcoming from that gentleman, she concluded her remark by saying: "Not for the best man alive would I trail down into that dirty, dingy place."

Wilkinson groaned with disgust.

"Nevertheless, there were some women," he reminded her, "who came there, clad in rags, and stood, stood, stood on their tired feet all day long, outside the cells of the men they loved. They were wives, mostly wives, too, for I heard what they had to say. . . ." He, too, appealed to Beekman. "It's worth while, Beekman," he wound up, a trifle sadly, "to be loved for yourself alone, and not for your money, isn't it?"

The mistress of the house lifted up her voice in raucous mirth.

"I don't see, Peter," she returned, "that you have any money to be loved for now."

"Hence," commented her lord and master, while Beekman grew hot and cold by turns at this free and easy bickering, "hence you didn't come down to the Tombs. But," his forefinger shot out and, figuratively speaking, touched her on a vital spot, "you made a big mistake! If you'd been there the artists of the daily press would have had you shown up in forty different poses for Sunday. I had the devil's own time in keeping Leslie's face from getting in. But yours—I could have had it in every hour of the day without its costing me one penny."

The lady leaned forward in genuine eagerness, and asked:

"Is that true, Peter? I thought they had abandoned me—left me on the shelf. But if it's true, I promise to be there every day the next time you're locked up."

Peter V. paled perceptibly.

"There isn't going to be any next time," he laughed. "Eliot Beekman's going to see to that."

Meantime in the Colonial drawing-room, Leslie was enjoying a quiet tête-à-tête with Colonel Morehead.

"It was the nicest thing in the world, Colonel," she was telling him, "your picking out Eliot Beekman for—for father. And I believe you're right. Mr. Beekman is so honest, so earnest, and so convincing. And he looks you in the eye so."

"Um, how does he look you in the eye?" returned the Colonel, meeting her gaze.

But Leslie, flushing, had already fled.

It was hours later, when alone with Beekman, she looked into his eyes squarely, as was her habit, and asked falteringly:

"Do you know, Mr.—Mr. Beekman——"

Beekman stopped her.

"Begin again," he commanded, "you can do better than that."

"Mr. . . . Mr. . . ." she started in, but again Beekman protested.

"Now look here, I'm only one of six lawyers in your father's case. Every last man of 'em calls you Leslie—even Patrick Durand, and I'm going to call you Leslie, too. It's a part of my duties, as your father's counsel in the case. Therefore, you begin again, and begin it right."

There was a moment's pause in which Leslie averted her face.

"Eliot," she finally whispered, in gentle tones, her eyes coming back to his, "I think it is perfectly fine of you to help father in this way. Don't you know," she went on, "you said that night on the way home from Mrs. Pallet-Searing's, that you wished you could do something for him, help him some way. And now you've buckled on your armour in his defence."

"Hold on there!" called out Beekman, in alarm. "Wait a bit! Is that what you call it—

my helping him? Why, there are just about ten thousand lawyers in the Borough of Manhattan who'd give their eyes to get the job. And, besides, don't laud me yet. Great Heavens, Leslie! Don't you understand that I've got a fat retainer in my pocket for all this?"

The girl laughed in glee.

"So much the better!" she exclaimed. Presently her brow wrinkled and she demanded: "Who paid it to you, Eliot?"

"Colonel Morehead," quickly spoke up Beekman.

"I wonder where he got the money?" she mused, then she laughed once more. "Probably my money," she said. "Wouldn't it be great if I were paying you for this?"

"It would," answered Beekman in mock solemnity, "because, getting this much out of your coffers, I should have hopes in time of depleting your funds to a very large extent, so that some day in the future, having flim-flammed you out of a large proportion of your worldly wealth, I should then stand on that footing of American equality I mentioned to you the other night, and might, in turn, 'with all these wordly goods I thee endow'——"

"Don't you be too sure," she said seriously.

Nor was it given to them to know what the fates had in store for them, that the time was soon to come when Beekman should be on that equal

footing, to which he referred, and, what is more, that he was to stand as the one man in the state, the cynosure of all eyes, his name on every lip.

"At any rate," she went on, "it's fine of you to fight. . . . You're going to fight, aren't you?"

He looked over her head far into the future. It was all hazy there, but in his ambitious purposes Beekman recognised that he held within his grasp the one big opportunity of his career.

"Fight," he echoed, "to the last ditch."

"And so am I," she went on enthusiastically. "We'll all fight, and we'll win; we're bound to win."

"We're bound to win," he repeated, the blood surging through his veins. "And when we win—what then?" He looked deep into her eyes; but she cast them down before him.

"Let's win first," she faltered.

If only there had been a warning hand, a friendly voice to tell him what lay before him in the future! For could he have heard Wilkinson's words, that very afternoon, to the Assistant District Attorney: "The man who does me a favour I never forget; the man who injures me I never forgive,"—he might have thought twice before replying:

"It's a go. You're quite right. We'll win first."

X

"You ought to have been there, Patrick! By jinks, you had . . . !" exclaimed Wilkinson some months later as he watched the rings of smoke from his cigar float upwards to the ceiling of the Millionaires' Club. "I fixed him, didn't I, Colonel?"

Colonel Morehead thought a moment before replying:

"I shouldn't wonder if you did, Peter. You furnished the evidence of deliberation—that essential element in a murder case—the lying in wait. Yes, your admirable efforts in that direction will probably land Ilingsworth in the chair."

"Probably! Oh, thunder," put in Patrick Durand, one of the cleverest criminal lawyers in the city, "that man Ilingsworth is dead already!"

Colonel Morehead placed the finger-tips of one hand against those of the other as he made answer:

"If he'd been merely one of a crowd of maddened depositors, acting in the heat of passion, it would have been second degree, without a doubt. And yet,"—and the Colonel darted sharp glances first at Durand and then toward his client,—"in my opinion, the star witness of the prosecution

was your daughter Leslie. The jury believed every word that she said."

And indeed such had been the case at Ilingsworth's trial. Assistant District Attorney Leech had made no mistake in the order of summoning his witnesses. After her father, bluff, arrogant and eager—and over-willingness is a bad virtue in a witness—had finished his testimony, Leslie had taken the stand and had wholly removed the bad impression Wilkinson had made on the jury through his evident desire that Ilingsworth should be convicted. Moreover, Leech had trained the girl, as he did all his witnesses, to answer the essential facts, and nothing else. And to make his task all the easier, Ilingsworth's lawyer, a hanger-on of the criminal courts—for Ilingsworth had had no funds to employ first-class counsel, and a prisoner without money is a doomed man in New York—had wallowed through the trial without a glimmering of common sense. From the first, as might have been expected, he had played directly into the hands of the People. But his blundering had not been without its interesting side—interesting, at least, to a few of his hearers. For despite the Assistant District Attorney's strenuous objections, the Court had overruled his contention that the entire conversation between Giles Ilingsworth and Leslie that memorable afternoon was irrelevant and immaterial, and in

consequence the good-for-nothing lawyer had led Leslie on to tell in detail all of Ilingsworth's grave charges against her father. And it was at that point, and barely before the girl had uttered two hundred words, that a reporter of the *Morning Mail* had succeeded in wriggling his way through the lawyers inside the rail, and had not crept back into his place and resumed the taking of copious notes until the court stenographer to whom he had whispered: "Say, old man, I want all this, word for word, by two o'clock, at any price," had nodded his willingness to accept the fifty-dollar bill that he was sure the *Morning Mail* must vouchsafe him for this hurry job.

And so it happened that an hour later the *Morning Mail* man was telling Mr. Ougheltree of the Twentieth Century Bank and head of the bankers clique that owned the *Mail,* that he had to stand by this man Ilingsworth from start to finish. And as a result of this interview the few spectators at the afternoon session of the court had heard the celebrated Worth Higgins inform the Court that he had been retained to conduct the case for the defence, as well as the Court's complimentary remarks in reply.

But Worth Higgins had been of little service to the defendant, though he had drawn from his witnesses, especially Ilingsworth, all that they knew or suspected about Wilkinson's management

of the seventeen bankrupt trust companies—a feat which, as will readily be imagined, was all that the *Morning Mail* required of him. In truth, Higgins had done Ilingsworth more harm than good. The defendant had deliberately purchased a gun; had lain in wait; had shot a man down in cold blood. Not the man he had aimed at, it is true, but the principle was the same.

"Will the defendant deny that he did the shooting?" had been Higgins' query to Boggs.

"Of course he will," had been his fellow-counsel's answer. "He's as innocent as a newborn babe."

And with that Higgins had put the defendant on the stand and heard him deny it—a weak, wabbling denial it was, in reality merely a recital of his wrongs.

"That's all," Higgins said, when the testimony was over, and then he had added in an aside to his junior: "His goose is cooked."

Nevertheless, at the suggestion of the *Morning Mail* man, he had taken all the exceptions possible, remarking to that gentleman's intimation that the case was going up for an appeal: "A good thing it is, for it's a gone case here."

And Higgins had been quite right. For, a short time after this the jury had filed back and pronounced the one word of doom.

In common with everyone in the court-room,

save Ilingsworth and his daughter, Leslie had expected just such an ending. All though the trial she had longed for the words that would relieve her from the thraldom of uncertainty in which she was held; yet when the foreman had pronounced the verdict it had shocked her inexpressibly, left her indescribably sad. For some moments she had struggled to regain her composure, and fearful of a break-down, she had fled, but not in time to escape seeing Ilingsworth slump down into his seat with a faint moan. At the door the sound of many voices and exclamations of pity had reached her ears. She halted, and looking back she saw that the commotion was the result of some woman who had fainted. And then it was that she saw, too, the never-to-be-forgotten picture of Elinor Ilingsworth, friendless and helpless, looking hopelessly down upon her father while she endeavoured to soothe him with endearing words. Impulsively Leslie had started back, a vague intention of putting her arms around the girl's neck, of taking possession of her, as it were, and carrying her, who needed care so much, to her own home. But like a flash the futility of such a course had dawned upon her. For the realisation had been borne in upon her that it was her own testimony, more than anyone else's, that had been the means of convicting the girl's father; and that for her to offer words

of sympathy to the daughter would be a mockery if not an insult. It was, therefore, with a sigh that Leslie had again retraced her steps, forcing herself to be content with giving the girl a glance of infinite pity.

"Conceding that Leslie's testimony did for him," Wilkinson was now saying to his cronies at his club, gulping down his Scotch, "conceding that, but who set her on—made her testify? It was I who bit into that fellow's heel, and don't you forget that I'm proud of it."

Morehead stared through the cloud of collecting smoke.

"I wish, Patrick," he proceeded to say to Durand, in his own calm way, "that you could have been there for just one reason: I am anxious to know whether my view of the effect of Peter's testimony on the jury is correct."

Patrick Durand waved his hand.

"You ought to know, Colonel."

"Don't you think it had a good effect on 'em, Morehead?" queried his client.

Morehead rose and stretched his legs, and without glancing, even, at Wilkinson, he said bluntly:

"Durand, I watched them closely—each one of the twelve. And, mark my words, if it hadn't been for Leslie, I don't believe one man in the

twelve would have believed a word that Peter said."

Wilkinson turned red.

"What the devil do you mean, Morehead?" he roared. "Is this an insult?"

Morehead never flinched.

"Sit down, Wilkinson," he commanded curtly. "I'm talking to Mr. Durand. What do you think, Patrick?"

Patrick Durand glanced over the rims of his glasses at the ceiling.

"Representative men, were they, Colonel?" he asked.

"A good mixture," said the Colonel. "I never saw a better. . . ."

Durand drew a long breath.

"It looks bad—mighty bad, Colonel, for us," he observed calmly.

"What do you mean? How bad for us?" insisted Wilkinson, his face still red with the imputation cast upon him.

Durand looked at him long and searchingly, doubtful whether to take him into their confidence or not. Presently he said:

"It's just this, Brother Wilkinson: If an ordinary jury isn't going to believe a man when he tells the truth, what are they going to do when he deliberately lies?"

"But hang it, man," exploded Wilkinson, "I didn't lie; I told the truth."

"Yes, Wilkinson, you told the truth in this Ilingsworth case, but it's your own case we're thinking about. There'll be a jury in that, too."

"You fellows make me tired," growled Wilkinson. "My case—if it ever comes to trial——"

"Oh, don't you worry about that! It will come to trial, all right," put in Flomerfelt, speaking for the first time, and helping himself to a fresh cigar.

"It won't if my overtures to District Attorney Murgatroyd are accepted," retorted Peter V.

The two eminent counsel lifted up their eyes in mild surprise.

"You don't mean to say you're going to bribe Murgatroyd?" came in chorus.

"Why not?"

"You've got enough indictments against you already, Peter," they warned him, "without having Murgatroyd charge you with an attempt to bribe."

"No, indeed, you can't bribe Murgatroyd," spoke up Flomerfelt, with a knowing smile. "Though I'll tell you what, Colonel," he went on, "there is a chap who's not above suspicion on that staff."

Morehead winked.

"The hold-over from the last administration?"

"You mean Leech?" gasped Wilkinson.

Flomerfelt nodded.

"It's better to hear you say the name than to say it ourselves, Peter," remarked Morehead.

"Why, then the case needn't come to trial!" exclaimed Peter V., joyously. "We can get at Leech."

"Not in a hundred years!" ejaculated Flomerfelt. "Murgatroyd stands behind these indictments in your case, don't you forget that. And even if Leech tries them, Murgatroyd will be there to see. . . . The Assistant District Attorney won't be able to move out of the beaten track. Your case will come to trial, never fear."

"Well, then, let it come," grunted Wilkinson, a little ruffled by the demeanour of Flomerfelt and his counsel. "But by that time this man Ilingsworth will be dead; we'll shove everything on him."

"I don't believe Ilingsworth will be dead," remarked Morehead. "Indeed I do not."

"Well, even if he isn't," retorted Wilkinson, huskily, "he's wholly discredited. A man who'll murder may commit other crimes; the jury will believe anything of Ilingsworth by the time we're through with him."

Morehead held up his hand.

"Durand and I have gone over this whole thing; have looked up every man on Flomerfelt's list; they won't stick to us, that's all. Wilkinson,

your crowd are down on you. And what's more, the *Morning Mail* now stands behind Ilingsworth, and they're going to stick by him. So if we make this attempt to unload iniquity on Ilingsworth and fail, we'll do two things we don't want to do: One is, we'll make the dangerous admission that there has been iniquity; and the other, psychological problem as it is, is quite as much to be feared——"

"Fire ahead," interrupted Wilkinson.

"I'm banking on Beekman—banking on his personality with his jury, and I don't want the ghost of a doubt to show in his face. That's why I sent him to Europe. Of course we need the evidence he's getting over there—it's good stuff. But I sent him now in order that he shouldn't even read, save in a casual way, this story of Ilingsworth. A true story is a mighty bad story, Peter. So we'll cut Ilingsworth out of this case. If the People produce him—and I'm satisfied they won't—why we'll try to get him on the cross-examination. Durand and I have talked it all over, and our game is going to be a game of denial from start to finish. I doubt whether the People make out the case against you. If they don't we've got 'em nailed. And if the judge sends the case to the jury, we'll deny everything the People put up against us. But it's a lucky thing for you that they'll believe your daughter Leslie."

"It's a pity, Wilkinson," said Flomerfelt, with something like a sneer, "that while you were about it, you didn't swing this thing in a more careful way. Of course it's too late now. You bit off more than you could chew that time! You thought you could get away with the goods—got careless! I've seen many a safecracker do the same thing."

Wilkinson flushed.

"Do you mean to compare me with——" he began; but Flomerfelt left the question unanswered.

"This is no Sunday-school picnic, and you may as well understand it now, Peter," said Morehead. "We've got to work for our living in this case, and you've got to do your share, have got to understand that it's a running fight from now on to the end."

"I'll do my part," Wilkinson assured them, burying his hands in his pockets. "But I want you to find out who the judge is going to be, and when the time comes, give me the names of the jury, and I'll get at them all right."

Colonel Morehead rose to his lanky height and clutched the shoulder of his opulent client.

"Wilkinson," he cried, shaking a lean hand in the other's face, "you don't know what you're talking about! And you might as well make up your mind now that you can't touch Murgatroyd, and you can't touch the Court. And Mur-

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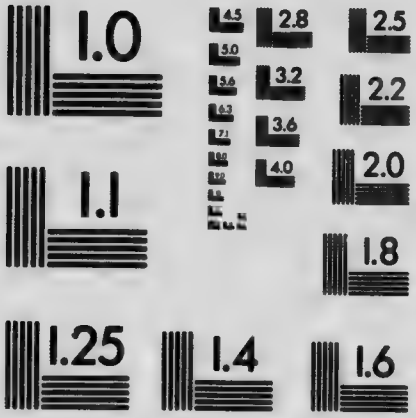

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gatroyd is there to see that you don't touch the jury. We—Durand and I—have got charge of this thing. You keep your hands off. . . ."

"But you're going to pull me out, aren't you?"

". . . In our own way. So far I've always had my own way in my cases," declared Patrick Durand, "and if I can't have it in this one, why, I'll retire, that's all."

"Yes, you must do as they say, Peter V." advised Flomerfelt, suavely, and then lowering his voice so that the others should not hear, he added: "If in the course of human events it should become necessary to lay a bribe in order to get you clear, I'll attend to that myself."

XI

"GUILTY, your Honour."

The voice was the tremulous voice of the foreman of a jury. His hand shook as it held the slip of paper from which he read the portentous words.

The Court leaned over toward him.

"I didn't catch that," said the Court.

Once more the foreman drew himself together, and moistened his lips before he repeated in shrill tones:

"Guilty, your Honour—guilty as charged in the indictment."

For a brief moment there was a silence; then the spacious court-room broke into subdued uproar.

"Jumpin' Jerusalem, I didn't think they'd have the nerve to do it!" came from a voice somewhere in the crowd; and judging from the expression on the faces of the people, this remark was fairly indicative of their opinion.

The Court rapped for silence, and nodded to Beekman, the active counsel for the defence.

"If the Court please," began Beekman, his face pale, and his voice trembling with surprise and

disappointment, "we move to set aside the verdict and for a new trial on the ground that the verdict is against the weight of evidence, against the charge of the Court, contrary to . . ."

A heavy hand was laid upon Beekman's arm.

"Hold on there! I want that jury polled!" The speaker of these words was Peter V. Wilkinson; for this trial was his trial; and this verdict was the verdict in his case. "Morehead, get 'em to poll that jury!" Again he spoke as one accustomed to command, and not as a prisoner before the bar.

"Poll the jury," directed the Court.

The clerk started to obey.

"Now, Morehead," went on Wilkinson in a hoarse whisper, "I want you to place in my hands —my hands, you understand—the name and address of every mother's son upon that jury. I won't forget 'em, let me tell you that."

"John T. Wyatt," droned the clerk.

And Wyatt, juror, stiffened for an instant, hesitated, and then taking a big grip on himself, answered as his foreman had: "Guilty." Every man in the box made the same answer; but as every man voiced his verdict, he met the sullen, defiant, vengeful gaze of a man who never forgot, who never forgave, and each man felt that instant as if, somehow, he were in the tightening grasp of the big millionaire at the counsel table.

"Now make your motions, Beekman," whispered Morehead.

And Beekman made a motion to set aside the verdict; made a motion in arrest of judgment; made a motion for a new trial.

Wilkinson watched the face of the Court as he had watched the faces of the jurymen.

"This is Gilchrist's chance to square himself, Morehead," he announced huskily. "He's got to give us a new trial, or we'll know the reason why."

But Judge Gilchrist merely swept the court-room with a weary glance.

"Motion denied," he said briefly, and with as much concern as if he brushed away a fly. He now turned to the jury. "Gentlemen," he went on gratefully, "you are discharged for the balance of the week—after this long, protracted trial—with the thanks of the Court, for the fairness, justice and impartiality of your verdict. Good-day, gentlemen."

"Wha—what!" gasped Wilkinson in a voice that could be heard all over the court-room. "Does he mean to say that this verdict is just—does he, Morehead?"

Colonel Morehead frowned with vexation.

"Keep quiet, Wilkinson," was all he said.

The Court waited until the jury had filed out, watching them as they went. Then his glance returned to the coterie of counsel at the table.

"Counsellor," he remarked to Beekman, "what day will be most convenient to you for sentence? And you, Mr. Leech?"

Up to this time Leslie, who had been sitting at the counsel table with her father, had listened in a sort of daze to the proceedings of the court. She had heard all the testimony, understanding it as best she could, and had gathered from her father's manner and that of his counsel, particularly Beekman's, that the whole thing was a mere matter of form, from which her father would come out unscathed and unscarred. The verdict had simply added to this vagueness; but when the Court had pronounced the significant and ugly word 'sentence,' it brought her up, as it were, all standing; and half-rising from her seat she held out her hand in an imploring gesture.

"Sentence?" she cried out in her excitement. "No, he can't mean that. . . ."

There was a titter from the women on the benches; it brought Leslie to her senses, and flushing and confused she sank back and covered her face with her hands.

"Leslie, brace up!" said Beekman, leaning over her, his voice showing his deep emotion. "It will come out all right. We'll win out on appeal."

Flomerfelt stepped to the fore and plucked Beekman by the sleeve.

"Let me have a word with you," he requested, whispering something in his ear.

Beekman at once addressed the Court.

"If your Honour please," he began, "may we have a brief consultation among counsel before we ask your Honour to set a day?"

"Certainly," agreed the Court, "you may step into the ante-room."

Six counsel and Flomerfelt and Wilkinson—eight in all—filed into the ante-room.

"Shut that door, Eliot," said Morehead. "Now, Flomerfelt, what's your idea?"

Out in the court-room J. Newton Leech, who had prosecuted for the People, left the side of Murgatroyd and went over to Leslie to offer his sympathy.

"Miss Wilkinson, this has been pretty hard on you."

"I don't understand it at all," the girl answered, turning her pale, tired face to his.

"I wouldn't worry," he went on, with something more than mere professional courtesy in his eyes.

And indeed Leech spoke truly when he said that the trial had been most distressing to Leslie. It had been doubly so, perhaps, because of the lack of the usual dramatic features. Forgery, perjury, larceny, ominous charges to be sure, had figured

in the case, but their proof consisted in large account books, private memoranda, original reports from the State banking offices, notes, stock transfers, in fact, everything to weary and little to excite.

District Attorney Murgatroyd, like the accusing ghost of Hamlet's father, had stalked silent, brooding, imperturbable, behind his assistant, Leech, dictating nothing openly, but seeing, knowing that no stone was left unturned. For the first two days of the trial the People apparently had made but little inroads upon the integrity of Peter V. Wilkinson; but at the end of that time, some new and powerful influence had made itself felt: shrewd accountants entered the court-room and sat at the Assistant's District Attorney's elbow; a financier or two kept at Murgatroyd's side; absolutely unassailable witnesses took the stand.

It was about this time that Morehead had nudged Durand and whispered:

"The *Morning Mail* and Oughéltree of the National Banks are at work. Here's where our trouble begins."

But although these two practitioners well knew, even at that early stage of the game, that the chances weighed heavily against them, not once did they flinch, not once did they permit the set expression of confidence to leave their faces. On the contrary, they turned to their leader and said:

"Beekman, the jury isn't even nibbling at this stuff. We've got a walk-over."

But Beekman could not bring himself to their point of view. With growing fear he listened to the evidence of the People as it piled up against his client. Nevertheless, Beekman had—just the thing that Morehead had said he had—an unaltering faith in Wilkinson. He was partisan to the last degree. And so quite naturally his intellect rejected the proofs of the People. Not that he did not appreciate their weight, but rather that he didn't believe their truth.

And what a fight he had put up for his client! To this day Beekman's summing up is remembered.

"We didn't make any mistake in getting him," Morehead had told Durand after the address to the jury.

Even Murgatroyd had been moved to admiration by his closing arguments, turning black into white, as he did, because it looked white to him, and the District Attorney had said to his Assistant:

"Leech, you couldn't do that in a thousand years—not the way he does it. And if it were not for public opinion, it is pretty certain that Beekman would get an acquittal from this jury. As it is . . ."

And not for one moment had Murgatroyd felt

that the case was safe until the foreman's tremulous tones had quavered forth upon the heavy air of Sessions.

During the first few minutes of the time that was passed in the ante-room behind closed doors, Beekman's face wore an air of profound dejection. Instead of joining, as was to be expected, in an animated discussion that the others were having, he had taken a seat by himself, and was reproaching himself with dereliction of duty. Imagine, then, his astonishment when presently the little coterie gathered about him and began to laud him for his good work.

"You're a wonder, youngster!" they told him. "And you may consider yourself engaged again right now, if we get a new trial."

"But they beat me! I failed!" replied Beekman, a look of bewilderment on his face. For he had expected reproaches, and here was genuine applause as for a winner instead of for a loser.

"Thought you were going to get me out of this?" growled Wilkinson, staring about him; for he knew that these men in some way were responsible for his losing his case.

"We are," returned Durand, grimly; but his eyes flashed a wireless message to the eyes of Colonel Morehead. And this wireless message

ran about like this: "We are going to get him out of this . . . but how?"

Colonel Morehead's glance travelled quickly around the room in a comprehensive way; then settled upon Wilkinson, and he said:

"Gentlemen, I think Peter V. had better be sentenced now."

"Now! Thunder and guns, not now! Give me another chance to get at the Court, or at Murgatroyd. I need time—put it off as long as possible," Wilkinson said, the tremour in his voice only half concealed.

"Time is dangerous," declared Morehead, with a shake of the head. "We don't want public opinion nor the *Morning Mail* to get to work. The public—except your own depositors—didn't believe that you were going to be convicted; they believed you to be only technically guilty. But give the populace two days to consider the fact that you've been convicted—convicted of forgery—I don't say you're guilty, Wilkinson—and let the *Morning Mail* hammer that in for a week, the Judge is bound to feel the force of this public opinion. It's the one thing from which no public officer can escape."

"Let Gilchrist sentence now, and you'll get off with a fine," interposed Flomerfelt; "that was my suggestion."

"That's the whole idea," said Patrick Du-

rand. "The less delay there is, the lighter it will be."

Meanwhile Assistant District Attorney Leech had been moderately successful in his attempt to soothe Leslie. His manner and his words, "I wouldn't worry," had seemed a guarantee to her that her troubles were about to vanish. She began to reason that nothing could happen to her father. Nothing ever did happen to respectable men like him—big men, rich men. And so she watched with increasing confidence the eight men file back into the court-room.

"If the Court please," Beekman was saying gravely, at her side, "instead of fixing a future day for sentence, we suggest that the Court pronounce its sentence now."

The suggestion fell like a bomb-shell in the midst of the crowd. Even District Attorney Murgatroyd rose to his feet in surprise.

"I see no reason," he began, and then remembering that he was not trying the case, he nodded to his assistant; Leech took the cue and pressed to the fore.

"This is an important case, your Honour," he contended, "and one that demands deliberation. It seems to me that it would be preferable to defer sentence until—say, Thursday of next week."

The Court quickly waved Leech back to his seat and addressed himself to the prisoner.

"What does the defendant say? Are you ready for sentence now?"

"I am," said Wilkinson, and rising at Morehead's nudge he stood glaring at the Court. Beekman was at his side, and extended his hand, saying:

"Before sentence is pronounced, if your Honour please, I should like to say a word or two on behalf of the defendant."

The Court likewise waved him back.

"I heard all you told the jury," remarked Judge Gilchrist, somewhat sharply. "You exhausted the subject, there's nothing left to say. I have the floor."

There was a pause during which the Court slowly took off his glasses, wiped them with his handkerchief and put them on again.

"This is an unusual case," he began, looking sternly at the defendant.

Back on the benches the crowd leaned forward eagerly.

"What will he give him?" asked someone.

On the rear seat Burns of the Ideal Dairy, who never missed a big trial, turned to his friend Porteous, the Park Row hardware man, and remarked:

"I'll bet you another fifty, Billy, that he fines him a cold million dollars—that or more."

The hardware man only laughed.

"Done," he answered. "Judge Gilchrist wouldn't dare to fine him over fifty thousand dollars—and——"

"Hush!" whispered Burns. "He's speaking now."

". . . confined for ten years in State's Prison at hard labour," concluded the Court.

The people looked at one another aghast; but Murgatroyd smiled a smile of complete satisfaction. As for Leslie, she turned a startled, half-reproachful glance at the Assistant District Attorney, and then her face went white and her head sank slowly down upon her arm that lay upon the table. Unconsciously Beekman rested his hand lightly upon her shoulder, and although the court-room seemed whirling about his head, he presently found himself counting the heart throbs that shook her frame. At the table Wilkinson's counsel exchanged glances, only Morehead and Durand apparently retaining their self-possession, and proceeded to gather their papers together, and scoop them into capacious leather bags, shutting the bags loudly with a snap.

Wilkinson's face was scarlet, his eyes flashing fire. From the instant of the rendition of the jury's verdict he had been a spluttering volcano of

righteous indignation; but now, as he glared at the Court, he was searching in his mind for some torture, some vengeance fitting for a judge who dared. . . .

"Do you mean to tell me, Gilchrist," he shouted so that all might hear, and advancing toward him, "that you've got the nerve to——"

The Court rapped for order.

"Clear the court-room!" he ordered; and turning to Beekman he added: "Counsellor, your client is beside himself. Take charge of him, or I'll have somebody do it for you."

Morehead and Flomerfelt pulled Wilkinson down into his seat and held him there while a court officer stood over him threateningly. For a brief instant, only, Gilchrist let his cold, judicial gaze meet the hot belligerence of Peter V. Wilkinson; then he rose, gathered his robes about him, and passed on to his private chambers.

Immediately four New York newspaper men boldly took possession of the bench and got three flashlights of Wilkinson struggling in the grasp of his attorneys. It took less than three-quarters of an hour to clear the court-room, but within that time New York was reading the head-lines: "Ten years at hard labour in State's Prison for Peter V. Wilkinson, the multi-millionaire." As a piece of news it was unquestionably quite worth while; and in an incredibly short space of time London

and Paris had it; that night Constantinople had it; the world had it and gloated over it.

"What are they going to do to you, father?" cried Leslie, when two uniformed officers laid hands upon Wilkinson.

"That's what I'd like to know," he answered in alarm.

"Take him to the Tombs, of course," spoke up one of the officers. "What else is there to do?"

"No, I won't go back there! I refuse . . ." cried Wilkinson, struggling.

Morehead laid a detaining hand upon the officer's arm.

"Wait a minute, officer," he said. "We'll file a notice of appeal inside of ten minutes. We're having it prepared now. We'll give bail—renew the bond. . . ."

Murgatroyd stepped forward and said, clipping his words off as he spoke:

"I shall oppose this man's release on bail pending an appeal, unless his present bail is increased to double the amount."

"A million dollars! What are you talking about!" exclaimed Morehead.

"I'm talking about the new rule," returned the District Attorney; "and you know just as much about it as I do." And then smiling significantly

he added: "I think Judge Gilchrist will do pretty much as I say. Maybe he'll ask for more because of your client's outburst when sentenced. If you want to see the Judge, come along with me."

"And in the meantime, Chief, shall we lock him up?" queried an officer.

"Wait a bit," put in Leech, courteously glancing at Leslie. "Suppose Mr. Wilkinson stays in my room until"—he looked at the Colonel now—"you can give bail this afternoon, can't you?"

"Not if it's a million dollars. Murgatroyd, this man has got to rely upon his daughter's money," he pleaded. "We couldn't raise a million dollars in a month."

"Yes we can," snapped Wilkinson, the cold sweat standing out on his forehead. "We can raise twice that in an hour."

There was an interval of silence in which Morehead tried to look unconcerned, and Murgatroyd winked at Leech.

"I thought he had it somewhere," whispered the District Attorney to his assistant.

With this proof before him that he was standing in the presence of a man far from bankrupt, Leech became doubly attentive.

"I think I can accommodate Mr. Wilkinson in my private office until five o'clock," he suggested

smoothly. "Two officers can remain on guard outside, Chief. Is that all right?"

Murgatroyd nodded a tentative assent before saying:

"Come, Colonel, and we'll see the Judge. . ."

And an hour and a half later the bail had been fixed and matters arranged by Morehead and his colleagues with the surety company. But when the Colonel was back again in Leech's private office, he whispered to Wilkinson:

"Where's your nerve, you confounded idiot! Now you've given the whole thing away! If you'd gone back to the Tombs for a few days longer. . . ."

Wilkinson gave him a look of withering scorn, and measuring his words carefully, declared:

"I'll never be locked up, Morehead, again—anywhere. I told you once, and I tell you now for all time, that they'll never get Peter V. Wilkinson again behind the bars."

Colonel Morehead made no comment, but favoured him with an enigmatical smile. After a moment or two, he went on to explain that if Wilkinson had kept quiet they could have hunted up some of his friends and had the thing fixed up in forty-eight hours; that now, after what had happened, everybody, and especially Ougheltree and the *Morning Mail,* would know that he had this money tucked away somewhere; and that before

long they'd find out where the rest of it was, concluding with: "Somebody'll get it, Wilkinson—they'll get at it."

Wilkinson resented, with a shrug of the shoulders, this interference with what he considered his business, and made no answer. But turning to Leslie, he said irritably:

"Leslie, just put your name on the back of these things, will you. The surety company is waiting for them."

Leslie's face showed a peculiar change; and she turned the certificates over to read them before attaching her signature.

"Half a million more!" she gasped. "Why, I don't own that much, father. They can't be mine to sign away, can they?"

"Do as I tell you," ordered her father, gruffly, taking them out of her hand and turning them face down. "Sign your name on the back of every one of them." And when she had done so, he said to a waiting messenger: "There, now, Surety Company, fork over that new bond." And motioning to Morehead: "Call Leech—there's his bail."

XII

PETER V. WILKINSON was taken to his home in his big Mastodon car. With him, besides the chauffeur, were his daughter Leslie and Colonel Morehead. The news of the verdict, the sentence, and the release on bail had travelled even faster than the sixty-horse-power machine whose passengers had to fight their way through an impacted mass of humanity which filled the sidewalk and the street in front of Wilkinson's big place on the Drive. But then it was not every day that people had the chance to look upon an ex-multimillionaire who had been sentenced to ten years at hard labour and had given a million-dollar bail!

With difficulty they reached the door, and a moment later it closed upon them.

"Where's Mrs. Wilkinson?" asked the multimillionaire of the first footman he came across. And in an aside to Morehead: "I suppose the missus will have a few remarks to make."

He was informed that Mrs. Wilkinson was in her room and feeling poorly,—"Very, very poorly," the servant had been told to say,—a condition of late chronic with the lady. And she had developed another alarming condition: her increasing avoirdupois, the disappearance of the last rem-

nants of her charms, the palpable bankruptcy of her husband, and her envy of her step-daughter Leslie—the only member of the household who still had grace of mind and face and figure, to say nothing of wealth—all these had developed in the lady a latent ferocity, a tigerish temper which seemed to hold unlimited force behind it. All over the great house her shrill virago's voice could be heard terrifying the servants; in short, her sudden rise to power was, perhaps, best described by another member of the household. "The missus rules the roost now," was the way her husband put it, and he knew whereof he spoke. Indeed, for that matter, Wilkinson, himself hitherto fearing no one, and priding himself in the fact, actually trembled now during the few moments that he was compelled to be in the lady's presence.

"Colonel, you've got to come with me," begun Wilkinson.

"Not I," was the brief refusal.

"You've got to come if I have to pay you to do it," insisted the husband. "I won't go up alone."

And Colonel Morehead would probably have used an even more forcible expression of refusal to do the husband's bidding had he known that at that very moment his right-hand man was closeted upstairs with his wife, and was telling her,—

with one of his inscrutable smiles,—a smile that was intended to convey that it rested wholly with him whether Wilkinson would get off or not,—that Wilkinson was convicted, because the men who took the witness stand happened to tell the truth and had ended emphatically with: "The whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

But it happened that when they entered on tiptoe the lady's boudoir—Morehead having been finally persuaded, much against his will—the lady did not deign to acknowledge Morehead's presence, but sobbed out to her husband:

"You did not stop to consider me! Why did you let them do this thing to you? It all falls on me. The intolerable disgrace, shame, humiliation! You, a felon, a convict, a common thief, a forger!" One after another she hurled these epithets at him, while Flomerfelt discreetly withdrew.

Wilkinson looked at Morehead for sympathy; then he answered with illy assumed contrition:

"Yes, my dear."

"I can't face anybody—not my dearest friends," went on the lady. "I shall never be able to go anywhere again—never."

Wilkinson grinned feebly at his lawyer.

"They say I won't, either, for the next ten years," he said, in soothing tones.

His jibe aroused the sleeping tigress in her. The lady rose and pointed toward the door. Her

gown was a masterpiece of dressmaking art, for singular as it may seem her income had not been stopped. Upon her breast lay jewels worth many thousands; about her neck was clasped a dog-collar weighted with heavy pearls; and her fingers sparkled with gems.

"You can go!" exclaimed the lady, stamping her foot—this lady who would have been nobody without the wealth that this man had lavished on her. "All these years you've considered everybody but your wife," she went on. "I've had to bear the brunt of it all. I—I. . . . The idea of you letting them send you up for ten years, of heaping all this infamy on me! I shall sue for divorce, do you hear, divorce!"

"Yes, my dear," said Wilkinson, again meekly glancing at his counsel.

"Go!" she exclaimed; then added with commendable melodramatic force: "You and your paid hireling there, leave me!"

Colonel Morehead grew purple in the face. He advanced toward his client's wife.

"Madam," he began angrily.

"Come, Morehead, come away!" exclaimed Wilkinson, and he led him out into the hall where he said: "Don't you know she'd have scratched your face if you'd stayed there any longer?"

Tumultuously they descended the stairs and crept into the den on the floor below.

"That's over," sighed the husband, setting the

decanter on the table and passing the cigars. And for a while, at least, the two men smoked in peace.

Blissfully happy was the condition that Leslie told herself that she was in that evening. They had assured her after the council of war behind closed doors that everything would come out right. And now, last but not least, Beekman was alone with her and telling her the same thing.

"The verdict is ridiculous," he said. "Public prejudice, that's all. The Appellate Division will fill it full of holes."

"You're sure?" she asked, still a trifle dubious.

Beekman smiled confidently.

"Look here, Leslie," he returned consolingly, "lots of rich men have been indicted and tried lately, haven't they? You haven't heard of any of them having been imprisoned so far, have you? It's just a bit of hysteria, but the Appellate courts don't get hysterical. We'll win out upon appeal."

"There's—there's something, Eliot, I wanted to say to you." She hesitated a moment, and then went on: "If I'd been on that jury and a murderer had been on trial, after hearing your defence, no matter what I knew your man had done, I would have acquitted him, I know. I think you're wonderful!"

"If only our jury had felt as you feel, Leslie," he responded soberly. "If only they had acquit-

ted,"—and he was looking into her eyes now,—"why, things would be different to-night, so far as you and I are concerned."

The girl flushed prettily, but did not dare to meet his glance.

"We're going to fight it to a finish, aren't we?" she faltered.

"That's the compact," he returned. "You're right—we'll fight it to a finish—first."

"To see you, Miss Wilkinson." The voice was that of Jeffries, and he was handing her a card. Leslie took it and, turning slightly pale, started to leave the room. Before going out, however, she stopped and made her excuse to Eliot, begging him to wait until she returned. In the hall she asked Jeffries where her caller was to be found; she was told that he was in the music-room. In front of the door she paused and considered a moment. Not that she was not genuinely grateful for all that Leech had done for her father that afternoon, but out of all that day's experiences one thing clung to her memory more persistently than any other: the audacious admiration in the glance of the man who had spoken to her in the court-room and was now waiting for her.

However, she swept into the room and held out her hand.

"Miss Wilkinson," said Leech, meeting her half way and holding her hand in his longer than nec-

essary, "I had to come here to explain my part in your father's prosecution. Personally I am not responsible for it. I am a mere machine. Murgatroyd presses the button and we—I start up and go through the day's work, willy nilly. I wanted you to know, as I said before, that I am not responsible."

Never once did the man's eyes leave the girl's face; his look was one of bold admiration. He wanted the dainty girl before him, wanted the things that she stood for: the ease, the excitement, the power that great wealth brings. Besides, he was assured of something that Beekman did not even suspect, that Leslie, even, didn't know, and that was that Peter V. Wilkinson had somewhere millions upon millions, and that the man who married Leslie Wilkinson would sip the nectar of the gods from the first tolling of the marriage bell.

"I know, Mr. Leech, you merely did your duty," she answered somewhat coldly, lowering her eyes under his frank gaze. "We have intelligence enough for that. We're not altogether narrow here."

"I wanted to be sure that you understood my position," he proceeded, "to feel that my sympathies are with your father—with you. Yes, to the extent that were I a free agent, and not bound by my oath to the People, I'd turn in and work my

fingers to the bone for your father." He moved a little closer to her, and added significantly, "for you."

When Leslie returned to Beekman, singularly enough, she said nothing to Beekman of the Assistant District Attorney's brief visit; nor later did she mention it to her father. It would have disturbed Beekman; it would have pleased Wilkinson; but she could not know that.

XIII

It was a beautiful day in the early part of Summer. On the deck of the *Marchioness,* only a short time ago put in commission, Peter V. Wilkinson was lying back in his steamer chair, luxuriously. New York was experiencing one of the season's first hot days, but under the awning of the after deck of the *Marchioness,* and out of sight of land as she was, a delicious ocean breeze made life worth living, so it seemed, at any rate, to the two men sitting there, ever and anon calling to the steward, and refreshing themselves with Wilkinson's choicest wines and liqueurs with which the yacht was stocked.

"Do you know," remarked Wilkinson with a short laugh, as he threw over the side an unfinished cigar and lighted a fresh one, "I ought to have taken Leslie's original advice—ought to have sailed away on the *Marchioness* when they indicted me."

"You'd be in the thick of the trouble, Peter," returned his counsel sagely.

"Huh!" grunted Wilkinson, "don't know but I'll do it now, and take you with me, Colonel."

"Don't care if you do. It would end my troubles."

Wilkinson tapped the Colonel on the knee.

"Tell me, Colonel, how much money does that blatherskite get a year?"

"What blatherskite?"

"Gilchrist—the chap that had the nerve to sentence me."

Morehead told him; Wilkinson opened wide his eyes.

"You don't mean to tell me that's all he makes —his salary?"

The Colonel nodded.

"And do you mean to tell me that a man who only gets that much a year has the power to put away a man like me—can do a thing like that? What are we coming to in the United States?"

The Colonel laughed heartily.

"That man Gilchrist is a marked man from now on," went on Wilkinson. "His degradation has begun. He sentenced me all right; and I've sentenced him. I'll see to it that he's hounded out of New York. Any man that tries to set himself up before me—may stand up for five minutes or so, but he'll go down as sure as death and taxes. Every man that's prosecuted me, touched me, laid his hands on me physically or figuratively, is going to get it. I've got a heavy hand, Morehead, and they're going to feel it. They're going to know it's me. Gilchrist will get his, first."

The lawyer sniffed the breeze and closed his eyes in ecstasy.

"Oh, come now, Peter. . . ! I haven't enjoyed a day like this in years."

"You don't suppose I brought you along to have you enjoy yourself?" bluntly.

"No, I wouldn't credit you with that nobility of character, Peter. But I'm here no matter what your purpose may have been, and I propose to enjoy myself."

The multi-millionaire received this remark in silence. Colonel Morehead was one of the few independent men he had ever met. Wilkinson could never quite make him out, and therefore was afraid of him. As a matter of fact, Morehead's code was a simple one: he merely did his duty towards his clients in his own way; and if they didn't like it, that was their affair and not his. His acquired indifference was his greatest capital.

"At any rate," growled his host, "I suppose I'm paying you by the minute all the time you're here."

"Presume you are, Peter," sweetly answered the Colonel; "and that's a pleasure, too, to both of us, I'm sure."

"Business before pleasure is my motto, you know," resumed Wilkinson. "I brought you out here to have a quiet talk where even Flomerfelt or Patrick Durand cannot hear it. I haven't been able to pin you down to my case since my conviction. Look here, Morehead," he went on appeal-

ingly, "we'll reverse this sentence a hundred times over, eh?"

The Colonel, who had been sprawling lazily across his steamer chair, at this drew himself up to a sitting posture.

"Now look here, Wilkinson, we've appealed this case, and we've filed a bond, and you're out on bail. . . ."

"And we'll win out on appeal?"

"I was about to remark," went on the lawyer, quietly, "that your case will go first to the Appellate Division, then to the Court of Appeals, then—maybe to the United States Supreme Court. Then a few certificates of reasonable doubt, motions, stays, etc. It will take months, months, even if they rush it through. There's no hurry about discussing it; we can take our time."

Wilkinson was about to speak, but Morehead raised his hand.

"Since we're talking business, Peter, I may as well get to it, so that you can enjoy your pleasure afterward." He got up, yawned and stretched himself. Then looking Peter straight in the eye, he added: "What I wanted to impress upon you is, that after our last card is played, this conviction and this sentence are going to be——"

"Reversed, as sure as guns!" cried out Wilkinson.

"This conviction and this sentence," went on the

lawyer, ignoring the interruption, "will be affirmed." And so saying he leaned back in his chair and puffed away contentedly. A moment later he added: "Now, Peter, business is over, let's enjoy ourselves. What do you call that thing yonder—a schooner or a hermaphrodite brig?"

His wealthy client swaggered to the fore once more.

"Do you mean to tell me that a man who's worth a hundred million is actually going to serve ten years in State's Prison at hard labour? That's nonsense!"

"I mean precisely what I say," said Morehead, his voice ringing prophetically, "that this verdict and this sentence are going to be affirmed."

"I'll spend five—ten million to reverse it."

"Spend it, then, and I'll help you, and when you're through you'll know that I spoke the truth—affirmance, not reversal." He stopped abruptly, then rising and plunging his hands deep in his trousers pocket, he suddenly put the question to him: "I wish you'd tell me, Peter, whom your daughter is going to marry? I'm interested."

"What the devil has that got to do with this case?"

"By the way," went on Morehead, ignoring purposely the other's outburst, "where is your daughter now?"

"Home."

"Then you'd better swing the *Marchioness* about. When you get home you can find out if you do not already know."

"How should I know? there's a dozen cubs hanging around—none of them good enough for her. Leslie's got to marry well."

"Has she? A fine chance she has, with her father a convict under a prison sentence! Come, come, man, why don't you give your captain orders? I want to know whom this girl of yours is going to marry—and right away."

Wilkinson chuckled.

"Might send a wireless. . . ."

"You'd get a most remarkable answer, Peter." Morehead was now striding up and down, nervous, energetic strides they were, for he had shaken off his tendency to enjoyment. "I say," he went on, "I haven't heard you mention a word about the political situation so far; you're usually pretty enthusiastic."

"How can a man be enthusiastic about politics when he's got the sword of Damocles over his head."

"You're going to open fire on Gilchrist, aren't you?"

"Sure."

"That's politics," said Morehead, "and now that we're on the subject, I want you to do me a favour. Wilkinson, I want my man put up for

governor this year, and I want our backing, you understand—your influence, your money, all to back my man. Can I count on you, Peter?"

Wilkinson thought a moment before answering.

"Who is your man?"

"Um," smiled Morehead, "I don't know that —yet."

A short time after Wilkinson's return from the yachting trip, Leslie received a message that her father would like to see her. She found him with an unlighted cigar between his fingers sitting in his big arm-chair in the Den, gazing into space, his face like a mask.

"You sent for me, father, and I came," she said, entering, a faint smile on her lips.

"I sent for you," he told her in a level unemotional voice, "to find out something—something that you can tell me if you will. Strange things are happening nowadays. There are matters I'd like to settle before——"

"Before what?" she asked, startled.

"Before I plunge into this appeal and forget everything else," he answered easily; but now with just enough anxiety in his manner to alarm her, he repeated: "There's something that I've got to know—something that only you can tell me, girlie."

"I'll tell you anything, father," she answered softly.

Wilkinson caught her by the hand and drew her to him, asking so suddenly that she started: "Who's the man you're going to marry?"

The girl disengaged herself from her father's embrace. The blood rushed to her face, and she laughed a little uneasily. After a moment she answered:

"How can I tell! He—nobody's asked me. Has anybody asked you, father?"

Wilkinson chuckled over her reply, though her evasiveness slightly irritated him.

"Come," he said, "is it Berry Broughton, or Larry Pendexter, or Montgomery?" Her father rattled on without giving her a chance to answer, the girl's face growing more and more scarlet as he proceeded.

"It must be Eliot Beekman or Tommy Cadwalader," he declared, searching her face. But still Leslie made no answer, though there was the same embarrassed flush upon her countenance.

"Well, can't you tell me who it is?" he questioned impatiently.

"I don't know," she protested, "really, I do not."

"But I've got to know," persisted her father.

But whether she could not or would not tell him, his efforts were unsuccessful, for she merely

fled in a panic from the room. So that it was in a voice whose tone was one of defeat that he called out:

"You can come now, Colonel!"

From the heavy curtains Colonel Morehead emerged—a grim figure lying in ambush, he seemed, as he asked:

"Well! who's the lucky man?"

"Blamed if I could find out."

"But I did. Eliot Beekman is the lucky man, Peter."

"How do you know?"

"You may think you know men, but, at any rate, you don't know women, Peter. I merely watched her face."

"So did I," spluttered Wilkinson, "but I didn't . . ."

"Peter, you asked me the name of my candidate for governor," said Morehead himself in a manner that suggested that he was quite ready to get down to business.

"Well?"

"His name is Eliot Beekman."

Peter V. Wilkinson looked his surprise.

"And why Beekman?"

"One reason is because he's going to marry your daughter. I was satisfied of that, even before I heard this interview. But there are other reasons: he's a partisan; he's taken sides with you;

the boy believes in you; and as long as your daughter sticks to him he's bound to believe in you, and he'll stick to you, too. Now, Peter, do you see why I've picked him for governor, and why I want your backing?"

"There's one thing I don't quite see, and that is your real reason for wanting him for governor. Tell me that, will you, Colonel?"

Colonel Morehead took his cigar from his mouth, and thrusting his face close to Wilkinson's, he said, speaking very distinctly so that his client should not misunderstand his meaning:

"Because, my dear Peter, after you've spent your millions on appeals and bribes and legal curlyques —when you find at the end of the race that a ten-year term is still staring you in the face, it will be a deuced comfortable thing, Peter, to know that up in Albany you've got a friend, a partisan, a son-in-law *who's got the power to pardon.*"

There was a pregnant pause in which both men watched each other with a curious expression on their faces. Finally Wilkinson rose and strode around the end of the desk, and holding out his hand, he said:

"Colonel, I've been curt and disagreeable in my talk to you. I want to say now that I take back everything, except the good things, that I've said. You're a wonder—a perfect wonder!"

"Remember, I'm to manage this campaign,"

warned the Colonel. "Everything wi' be done from the outside. No one, not even Leslie nor Beekman, must know a word about it. You promise?"

"I promise to keep my hands off," agreed Wilkinson, but the next instant he added: "Come to think of it, though, I don't see why we have to do it. I'm sure that my conviction will never get that far. If necessary I'll buy up every judge from here to Washington."

XIV

LABOURING evidently under the stress of some new and strange excitement, a man strode swiftly through the darkness of the night. He was a tall, spare individual, clothed from neck to heel in a long, loose raincoat that clung closely to his body, though the ends flapped freely in the wind. It was a dark, stormy night early in November, and although the storm pelted his uplifted face as he sped along, he never heeded the elements; nor did he notice that few pedestrians were abroad on a night that, had the weather been more propitious, would have been a gala night. As it was, the crowds were under cover. Street-cars were loaded to their limit, taxi-cabs and hansoms by the hundreds passed and repassed, so that any time he might have escaped this drenching by lifting his finger. But the storm, after all, was what he wanted; it cooled and steadied him; and as he went along he laughed gently to himself from time to time.

"I got away from them, all right," he murmured, half aloud.

"Them" had been a mob of men at the Barristers' Club. They had surrounded him suddenly with outstretched hands, dragging him unmerci-

fully about. But at last, though this demonstration had made him happy, he had torn himself away to enjoy a greater happiness—one that meant all the world to him.

At the foot of a long hill he stopped and glanced toward its summit. To him, somehow, it seemed typical of his own career—a slow climb, but with a vision of glory at the top. And before he knew it he had mounted the summit and was waiting to be admitted into the presence of the one woman he loved.

"This way, sir," Jeffries whispered in his ear.

With a hasty movement Beekman flung off his dripping raincoat, dashed the drops from his face with a flirt of his handkerchief, and the next instant he was standing face to face with Leslie, who came toward him, smiling as she exclaimed:

"Where have you been hiding? I've kept the wires going all this afternoon and evening trying to find out about you."

"Leslie," he answered, his face ruddy with the swift walk and dampness, "they piled on top of me down at the club, but I got away from them—nearly tore the clothes from me, the beggars! You know what's happened, don't you?"

For answer she looked at him critically, bursting out with:

"Indeed I do! Stand off a moment—let me look at you—Governor Beekman."

He laughed soberly.

"It sounds fine, doesn't it?"

Leslie continued to gaze at him with pride.

"Do you know, Leslie," he went on, "I can't realise it—can't understand why Broderick—why the organisation picked me of all men for the office. Wanted a clean man, they said—the wave of reform demanded it, and they didn't know anyone who would fill the bill as well as I."

Leslie sobered.

"It's dest[illegible]," she said. "You were meant to go up, up, [illegible] . . . . ."

"Stop!" he called out with a well-feigned frightened look on his face. "I'm high enough now."

"Wouldn't it be fine," she continued with girlish enthusiasm, "if, after this, you could be United States Senator, Vice-President, and after that possibly——"

"The Big Job?" He laughed. "Why, I haven't even been sworn in yet." He stopped suddenly. "But I want to see your father, Leslie," his voice losing its note of gaiety, "I want to tell him——"

Leslie, too, left laughter behind her.

"Father's in his Den," she said quietly, "smoking his quota of big black cigars. The poor old dear feels pretty blue. The Appellate Division decision . . ."

On his way to the Den Beekman stopped and turned round, saying:

"I can't for the life of me understand, Leslie, why they affirmed that sentence. If they only half read Colonel Morehead's brief, or even mine, they surely would have been convinced. . . . What do you suppose it is—whose influence is behind this thing?"

Leslie shrugged her shoulders.

"Father says that the National Banks have set their face against the Trust Companies—and it looks as if he were to be the victim of the clash."

"Ground between the upper and nether millstones," mused Beekman, shaking his head in genuine anguish of mind. Then he stiffened and his eyes flashed. "It will never stand, Leslie; nor can I see how Oughcltree of the National Bank clique can have any weight with the courts. But at any rate, when this thing gets up at Albany before the Court of Appeals, all local influence will fade away. Peter V. Wilkinson will get justice there. The other side are fighting only for money, but with us, Durand, Morehead and myself, why it's a fight for life, almost—and we'll beat 'em out."

Beekman's outburst took Leslie quite by storm. She had never seen him so roused, so strong, so fine.

"You make me sorry that you're Governor, Eliot," she said, her heart beating fast, "for I suppose now you're unable to be my father's counsel—or does a governor still practise law?"

Beekman's head drooped.

"You're right," he said at length, "I suppose I'm out of the fight. But the others are just as determined to win."

"How I wish father could have heard you a moment ago!" cried the girl, wistfully. "He would then understand what genuine loyalty is. He thinks every man he knows, and every woman, too, I guess, save me, is a time server. Every man has his price, according to his idea. I don't believe he thinks that he has a genuine friend in all the world—not one. Isn't it hopeless to suspect everyone like that?"

"How can he help it?" returned Beekman, pointedly. "Just what I told you about the rich American girl—how is she going to know, understand the motives of men . . .?"

Leslie's face went suddenly white; then she suggested almost too hastily, so she reflected later:

"If you want to see my father, remember he's in the Den." And an instant later Beekman found himself standing in the presence of Peter V. Wilkinson.

In his exuberance of joy Wilkinson almost flung

himself at Beekman. He grasped the other's hand with both of his, then clapped him heavily on the shoulder.

"Governor, my boy, you made a grand fight—a great fight! You're the right man in the right place! Proud of you, I am."

"Now about the Appellate Division . . ." began Beekman, but Wilkinson would have none of it.

"Not on your life!" said he. "Never mind me! No troubles to-night—only wine and wassail. All Governor and nothing else. The returns are all in, aren't they? No contests—nothing doubtful—sure thing—you're Governor and no mistake?"

"No mistake, Mr. Wilkinson," smiled Beekman. "It's all right."

For an instant Beekman hesitated and glanced about the room as though for inspiration, then his eyes settled down once more on Peter V.

"Mr. Wilkinson," he stammered, "I'm a bit old-fashioned, I suppose, all wrong, from the modern point of view, but I've got something on my mind—something——"

"Out with it," laughed the older man.

The Governor-elect gulped.

"It's—your—your daughter Leslie," he went on, still floundering. "I want to marry her—thought I'd ask you first."

"Ask me first?" exploded Peter V. Wilkinson. "Haven't you asked her yet?"

"Her money—I've always been afraid of people with a lot of money, and——"

"You needn't be afraid of me," gurgled Wilkinson; "I haven't any left."

"But the principle is the same," insisted Beekman. "I wanted to be sure, that's all."

"Suppose I refuse?"

"Oh, in that case, I should ask her anyway—and get her too, I think. I'm merely trying to do my duty by you, don't you see."

Wilkinson raised his hand and brought it down heavily upon the Governor's shoulder once more.

"Governor," he said, "you've always done right by me, and I believe you always will—I've that much faith in you. As for the rest, I don't know of any man that I'd rather trust my daughter Leslie to, than you."

Beekman's blood rushed tumultuously through his veins.

"I don't deserve——" he began quite formally, but Wilkinson cut him off.

"You understand," said he, searching his face, "that your being Governor makes no difference to me. I give you Leslie because I like you—I think you're a man."

Beekman left the room intoxicated with success. Indeed such was the magnetism of Peter V.

that Beekman left his presence, like many a man before him, with a feeling that he would be willing to face death, if necessary, in Wilkinson's defence.

The girl was waiting where he had left her.

"Leslie," he began and got no further, for the words that he had planned to say would not come to him. Finally he stammered out: "It's this way, you see. We're equals now—that is, you're the daughter of Peter V. Wilkinson and I'm the Governor of the State. Consequently I dare—oh, I want you—there!"

Leslie tried to pass him, but he was too quick for her. He caught her and drew her close to him, and for one instant his lips met hers. Then she wrenched herself away.

"Tell me what you want of me, Eliot, quick," she panted, a new, wild, haunting expression in her eyes.

"My wife," he stammered, swiftly advancing toward her. "My wife—I know that you—that you——"

Her eyes sought the pattern of the Kirzan underneath their feet.

"You know nothing," she said, her hands tightly clenched, the colour coming and receding on her face.

"I—I saw it in your eyes," he pleaded.

"You saw nothing in my eyes," she answered, speaking very determinedly.

Beekman paused. Presently he drew from his pocket a trinket and held it out.

"Leslie," he whispered, "perhaps I've been presumptuous, but you know I have always told you that I am old-fashioned. I got this for you."

"It's just like you," she said, taking the trinket for an instant. "There's not a man in all New York who would have thought of buying the ring before—perhaps I like you for it, though."

"But what will you think of me when I tell you that I had an inscription put on the inner circle? You had better read it, hadn't you?"

For an instant Leslie felt herself weakening as she saw their initials on the ring. With difficulty she restrained her tears, and it was with a sad little smile that she now handed him back the ring.

Then she shook her head.

"Eliot," she said in an unnatural voice, "I'm not blaming you. You did only what you thought you had the right to do. More than that, I may have led you on. But it can never be. No, don't come near me, please, I mean it. You don't know; you can't understand; things happen very suddenly, sometimes. I can't marry you, Eliot, that's all. I can't . . . I can't . . ."

Beekman's face became scarlet, for there was

something of the determination of her father in her voice.

"You've got to," he insisted, for he refused to believe that she was not for him.

But still she retreated before him.

"I can't talk about it," she repeated wearily, stubbornly.

"Will you tell me why?" he asked, forcing himself to be calm.

Leslie gave him a quick glance. His question came as a relief to her. She seemed on the point of answering it.

"Yes," she began, and then pressed her hand against her lips. "I mean, no—I can't tell you anything except—that the whole thing is absolutely impossible. You would not understand if I told you. I should never want you to understand it."

"Why wouldn't you?"

"Because the instant that you understood it, you would find that you couldn't understand it," she told him enigmatically. "And yet," she murmured as though to herself, "it's all so clear, so plain to me."

Beekman quickly caught her by the wrist. Her hand still clenched itself, and he could feel her nerves throbbing as with pain.

"Your father tells me it's all right," he went on, his voice growing hoarser as he proceeded, for

he couldn't see that he was making any headway with the girl; "he approves, gives his consent, all that sort of thing. He seemed glad, friendly. It seemed to be what he wanted. Why do you hesitate?"

"I don't hesitate," she answered, though uncertainly. All the time she was praying that he would let her go. She wanted to escape. All that she wished for now was to get to her room at the top of the house, where in solitude she could rest and weep.

"My father," she resumed, "knows nothing—nothing of my reasons. This is a matter of my own. Even he couldn't understand . . ."

Beekman dropped her hand and said:

"Leslie, tell me one thing: Is there some one else?"

Leslie looked down without immediately replying and gradually grew pale. Then with one of her quick changes she looked up and her eyes met his in a clear, straight glance.

"Yes," she said, tossing her head in the air, "there is some one else."

"Who?" he demanded in a voice that was distinctly authoritative.

The girl drew herself up to her full height and quietly reminded him that he had no right to ask the question. But when Beekman had gone, Leslie's face showed a peculiar change; the hard-

ness dropped from it, and was replaced by a look of intense sadness.

At the door of the Den she stopped to bid her father good-night.

"Well," he called out cheerfully, motioning her to come in, "it's all over then?"

Leslie seated herself upon the knee he offered her. She was pale and very tired.

"Yes, it's all over—all over."

Wilkinson was watching her closely.

"You seem to take it hard, girlie," he returned, puzzled.

"Yes," she sighed.

He drew her girlish head down against his breast.

"He's a bully boy for you, Leslie. Mrs. Governor Beekman, eh? Not bad! It's a good thing to have money, but it's a great thing to be a Mrs. Governor, too, and especially when the Governor happens to be a man and not one of those cheap politicians. I congratulate you, little one."

"You never used to think much of him," she faltered.

"True. But I didn't know him. I didn't know the stuff he was made of. Colonel Morehead sized him up right from the start. But he's the man for me, now, Beekman is, and no mistake."

Leslie closed her eyes and whispered softly, her hand creeping about his neck:

"Good-night, father."

The next moment she rose and slowly started to the door and then as slowly came back, thinking to herself:

"I might as well get it over once for all, so that to-morrow there'll be nothing to tell, nothing to do but to take up the routine of life again." And when she reached her father's side, she said bravely but with a little sigh:

"Father, I'm not going to marry Eliot Beekman."

"Not going to——" spluttered Wilkinson. For the first time in months his colour fled. "Didn't he—hasn't he asked you?"

"Yes, and I refused him."

"What?" he bellowed. "Why?"

"I had my own reasons," she replied, never flinching as her father glowered upon her from his height.

"A woman's reason, I'll wager. What's the trouble? Some other chap?"

"No."

"Nobody else, eh? Then, what's up? Don't you like Beekman?"

"Yes."

"Oh, you like him, but don't love him, that is, well enough to marry him. I don't care so much about the love. We'll leave love out of the question—it's too ticklish a subject."

"I like him too well to marry him," she answered earnestly.

"A woman's reason all right enough," muttered her father. "Talk United States, girlie. What's the trouble?"

Once more she clung to him, and said very tenderly, now:

"Father, won't you rest content, won't you let me stay with you always, always taking care of you, doing for you—there's no one else. . . ." She caught his big hand in hers. "I want to go down the years with you, hand in hand, never leaving you, father—never. . . ." She choked suddenly.

"You can do that as Beekman's wife," he persisted.

"I shall not be Beekman's wife," she insisted, strangling a sigh.

"I want to know the reason," he demanded, with that veiled threat in his tone which never failed of its results.

"Will you forgive if I tell you?"

"I won't forgive you if you don't!"

Leslie drew herself away and leaned against the door as though for support, for strength.

"Father, Eliot Beekman wouldn't ask me to marry him until he had made a positon for himself, had something to offer me. He has said it a thousand times. He's got pride—too much pride,

it seems to me. But I've got pride, too. Months ago I would have married Eliot—he didn't know that—any time he asked me. It's got beyond me now. He's got everything to offer me, I've got nothing in return to offer him."

"Nonsense, child! You've got money," protested her father, puzzled, "at least you have so long as I don't jump the bail."

"Oh, how I wish you would!" she cried, startled into sudden ecstasy by the thought. Then she went on: "Money, what is money to me? What was it to Eliot? Nothing save an obstacle. That isn't it; you haven't understood; and to tell you I've got to hurt—I've got to say things that—oh, don't misunderstand me, please. . . ."

"I'll misunderstand you if you don't go on," blurted out Wilkinson, unfeelingly. "Quick, now!"

"Why won't you understand, father, that it's because he has everything to offer, while I have nothing. He's been given the highest office that the State has to give—a position that he thought would entitle him to me—and I, who am I . . ?"

"You're the woman he wants, the woman he's earned, girlie," said her father, his voice softening.

"I am the daughter of a convict," she went on swiftly, her tones cutting into the air like frost.

Her father stared at her aghast for an instant.

Then he slowly returned to his seat at his desk and slumped into it heavily, and groaned.

"Ye gods, but you're harsh!" he cried.

"You wanted to know why," she answered, "and now you do not understand—you're everything to me, everything, father. But the reason—the world, the people of whom Eliot is going to be governor, they look only on the record, and I'm not his equal. Upon me rests this taint—I'm not complaining—I'm glad to stand by you, father. . . . But I have pride—how can I, with this disgrace upon us, give myself to Eliot Beekman?"

"Nonsense, girl," said Wilkinson, pulling himself together, "I'll get clear all right."

"When you do," she declared with a faint smile, "and if he then asks me, I'll take him. If he does not . . ." A sigh of misery escaped her.

"You're a little fool! Confound it, Leslie, this thing was all cut and——" He checked himself suddenly, remembering his promise to the Colonel.

"Cut and dried," she echoed in surprise.

"Yes, this National Bank conspiracy," he mumbled in confusion, "the courts here in the city are backing them up. But up there in Albany, I'll get free, you'll see." And now with a sudden change of manner, he continued: "Look here, Leslie, I've got reasons, too—reasons a darned sight better than yours, why I want you to marry Eliot Beekman. Never mind what they are. The

fact is, I want you to be settled—I want it all fixed. . . . I give you my word—the Colonel will give you his word that I shall get clear. We know it, we've got it fixed. . . . It's all right—there can't be a slip up. And now, besides my freedom, which I'm going to get, there's only one thing in the world that I want, and that is that you marry Eliot Beekman. Good heavens, girl, can't you see—don't you see that this thing is vital to me? I'm no woman, and I don't speak at random. You've got to marry Eliot Beekman; if you don't ——"

"I can't," she returned simply; and from this decision there seemed no appeal. "I can't accept him now, father."

Leslie rose and made a movement to go. But Wilkinson, feeling as though the hangman's noose was already settling about his neck, snatched up the receiver on his desk with one hand, while with the other he made an authoritative gesture for the girl to resume her seat.

"Is Mr. Flomerfelt in the house?" he called through the instrument.

A look of pained surprise and annoyance at once crossed Leslie's face. Heedless of it Wilkinson spoke again.

"In the library, you say? Give me that room and be quick about it."

There was a pause in which the eyes of both

father and daughter plainly showed to each other the strength of the will that lay behind them.

"Hello—Hello," called Wilkinson, "is that you, Flomerfelt?"

". . . . . ."

"Look here, Flomerfelt, had you an idea that Beekman——" Then, parenthetically, to Leslie, who was beating against her father's intentions to betray her confidences with as much success as a bird beating against the bars of its cage: "Of course, I'll tell him. Do you think for one moment that the wishes of a silly girl like you will be allowed to stand in the way of our well-laid plans —not much!" Then through the phone: "Yes, this is Peter V. and . . . Well, he has, and Leslie has refused him. . . . What's that? . . . Yes, he's gone. . . . No, she's here with me. . . . All right, I will." And with that he hung up the receiver, and turning round and facing the girl he announced: "Now, young woman, you will listen to my final word in this matter." But that word was not spoken, for at that moment there came a knock at the door and Jeffries, entering, announced a visitor for Miss Wilkinson.

XV

THERE was a flush on the face of Elinor Illingsworth as she left the office of J. Newton Leech. For the hundred and first time, perhaps, she had crept into the presence of the Assistant District Attorney, trusting that he might have some good news for her. Her father was her only relative; she had no friends in New York; and her money was nearly gone. At first, when she had gone to the Tombs to see her father, the authorities had permitted her to have her talks with him in the counsel room, where Leslie had seen her father, but as the weeks passed into months, things changed, and it ended in Elinor's sitting on the outside of a cell, holding her father's hand between the bars. And as they sat there with bowed heads her father had told her, not once, but a hundred times, that he was guiltless of the murder of Roy Pallister. And Elinor believed and felt that some day the truth would be known. Every hour, therefore, when it was possible she spent in going to and fro, between the offices of Worth Higgins and Assistant District Attorney Leech. Singularly enough, she received more encouragement from the latter than the former; indeed, Higgins gave her but little hope. Nor did he tell her that a

wealthy newspaper, for ulterior purposes, was employing him to fight for her father. Enthusiastic always at the crisis of a litigation, Worth Higgins, for some reason or other, had become cool, surly, sharp to Elinor, as time went on. Her visits annoyed him; he rebuffed her as often as he could. Leech, on the other hand, had been by no means chary of his promises to help her through her troubles; on the contrary, he was ever profuse, when the woman in question was pretty, and Elinor Ilingsworth was unquestionably pretty.

"I like to come here after seeing that old bear," Elinor had often said to the Assistant District Attorney. "Mr. Higgins is beginning to hate the sight of me."

"You see that I do not," invariably would be his answer; and, waving her to a seat, he would take one beside her and the two would chat.

Elinor was forced to admit that Leech became nicer as time went on. Always he suggested new hopes, new speculations, for he saw that it took but little to encourage her. He explained to her carefully the quasi-judicial nature of his office, how the District Attorney in theory was neither for nor against the criminal, but was always anxious, ready and willing to learn the truth. Soon he began to note that the girl grew shabbier in appearance day after day; that her face was thinning, and that her eyes were dark and lustrous.

"I'll do what I can," he had told her time and time again, his pulse quickening as he felt the pressure of her hand.

And Elinor would go forth, refreshed and strengthened; while Leech, settling himself comfortably back in his chair, would light a cigar, and fall to wondering when and what the end of it all would be.

"A pretty girl," he often reflected, "a mighty pretty girl. And, oh, such eyes!"

It was upon just such an occasion as this that Elinor went back to the Tombs more than ordinarily encouraged, and sought her father's presence. She sat down beside him and poured out to him her hopes. When she had finished he bent over her slender hand and his mouth quivered while the hot tears dropped from his working face.

"We've lost," he told her, in a voice filled with despair. "I heard it only a few moments ago."

"It can't be true," she replied incredulously, and with just the glimmer of a smile on her face. "Why, I've just left Mr. Leech, and he said nothing of it."

But nevertheless it was true. The old man handed her Higgins' letter, which she read; it verified what her father had told her.

"I've worked so hard," she faltered, leaning her head against the bars and sobbing silently as

though her heart would break, "so very, very hard."

Ilingsworth drew a long sigh—a sigh that had behind it the regret of years.

"It's all my fault," he said through the tears that rolled down his cheeks, "for being such a fool as to——"

"As to——" she repeated slowly.

"As to do anything at all," he finished. "Everything, everything I've done," he continued sadly, "has been the act of a fool. And now I'm going to die a fool's death. I wouldn't care if it wasn't for you, child. But you—how are you going to get along? How are you going to get along without money?" he concluded, breaking down completely.

"I have enough," she answered consolingly; "don't mind me."

But in truth Elinor Ilingsworth had only enough money to pay for a sleeping place, and was at her wits' end to obtain sufficient food.

"I'm all right, all right, father," she kept on insisting to her father's upbraiding of himself, now smiling through the tears which with difficulty she kept back, now patting his hand affectionately, always cheering him up.

"You're a brave girl," he told her, when their interview was over, and pressed her hand for a long time to his lips.

As Elinor was about to leave the Tombs, a young woman looking very much embarrassed slowly emerged from a recess in which there was a crowd of waiting visitors, and came towards her, saying:

"You are Miss Ilingsworth?"

Elinor shot a quick, distrustful glance toward the intruder, who, somehow, seemed very queenly to her, although there was nothing expensive about the woman's garments. She was dressed in simple black clothes. Elinor had hear of Tombs' angels, and presently decided that the woman must be one of them.

"Yes," she answered, wondering what she wanted of her.

"You don't know me," went on the woman, "but I have heard of you from—from friends of mine—that is, the Wilkinsons."

"You refer to the Peter V. Wilkinsons, I suppose," returned Elinor, icily; and without waiting for an answer added: "They are no friends of mine, and you must excuse me. . . . You can't possibly have anything of interest to say to me," she finished, and started to go. But the stranger, advancing in such a way as to bar her passage, pleaded for a hearing.

"I know that," she explained. "But I merely wanted to get your attention, wanted some excuse for my interference. I wanted to help you, if I

could. I know more about New York—all about New York. I can assist you in many ways. Won't you let me?" she concluded insistently.

Elinor was all attention.

"You mean that you can help my father?" she inquired.

The woman appeared to hesitate. At length she whispered "Yes."

"But how can you?"

"In many ways. I might be able to find some clue—anyhow, I want to help—him, of course, but particularly you."

Elinor looked dubious; nevertheless she suggested:

"Perhaps you'll come back and talk to him."

Her new acquaintance shook her head.

"Not now. But isn't there something I can do for you? Don't you need——"

"Money?" Elinor said, taking the words out of the other's mouth. "We have money, thank you," and added half hurriedly, half in embarrassment: "Will you excuse me if I leave you. I have an engagement with our lawyer, and I'm late."

The stranger laid her hand on Elinor's sleeve, and persisted:

"But can't I come and see you—won't you tell me where you live?"

There was something in the tone and action of

the woman that Elinor resented, though she didn't know just what it was.

"Really, I don't know what to say."

"I'm sorry you're suspicious of me. I wish I could prove to you that I'm sincere. Please tell me where I can see you."

"To-morrow, then, here," was Elinor's answer, and finally tore herself away.

The moment she entered Leech's office, he broke out with:

"You haven't lunched, I know. Come on, Miss Ilingsworth, we'll lunch together."

"I can't do that, Mr. Leech, I've lunched already," she told him. But Leech saw clearly the falsity of this statement in the pallor of the girl's skin, in the hunger in her eyes. And, in the end, as he had planned, she consented to go with him. A they sat at one of Raphael's small tables she confided to him how she had been accosted by a strange woman. At first Leech seemed to regard the incident as not worthy of attention; but on second thoughts he warned Elinor not to see the woman again. And his motive in doing this was by no means a disinterested one, for so clearly and faithfully had Elinor reported the conversation between the stranger and herself, that the Assistant District Attorney could not fail to believe that Elinor had, in reality, found a friend.

"One has got to be so careful here in New

York of everybody," he remarked with an admirable assumption of solicitude.

But true to her promise, the woman came to the Tombs the next day. And on seeing Elinor she came quickly toward her with outstretched hand; but the other merely shook her head and passed on inside. She felt independent of any outside aid now; for the attitude of Leech was most encouraging. And there was unusual happiness in her look, an infectious tone in her laugh as she said to her father:

"I know you'll get off somehow."

On the next day and the day after that, Elinor noted the woman still waiting at her post, still hoping, evidently, that Elinor would speak to her; and on each of these days Giles Ilingsworth felt the buoyancy in his daughter's manner.

"You're like a bit of sunshine in this place," he said.

On the third day, at sunset, he sent for the deputy.

"Deputy," said the old man, clutching his coat-sleeve pitifully through the bars, "I—my daughter hasn't been here to-day."

"I know," answered the other. "I've missed her, too."

"She must be ill," the old man said. "Is there any way of finding out? I have some money with me . . ."

They sent a messenger to Elinor's room; but the messenger returned with the information that she was not in. All that night Ilingsworth paced his narrow cell; but with the morning sun came new hopes.

"She'll be here to-day," he assured himself.

But she didn't come that day either. When his meals were brought to him he refused to eat. And again all that night he paced his cell. He was inconsolable.

Five more days passed without Ilingsworth having received word from his daughter, but then, just when it seemed that he could bear the suspense no longer, the deputy came to him and said:

"There's a lady downstairs who knows your daughter. She's been here every day, came just to see her. She wants to help—wants her address. Shall I give it to her?"

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the old man, eagerly.

In a little while the woman returned and told the deputy that Miss Ilingsworth had moved, had taken all her things, had gone, they didn't know where; and the warden repeated her words to the poor old man before whom lay many nights yet of sleeplessness and agony.

XVI

"I BELIEVE I once remarked to you, Mrs. Peter V., that I needed you," said Flomerfelt, his fingers stealthily groping into the depth of his sleeves for his cuffs, and when they were arranged to his satisfaction, he added: "to manage Peter V. It seems that I was mistaken."

"And you don't need me?" asked Mrs. Wilkinson anxiously. For the lady feared Flomerfelt, and realised that he was a dangerous man. In some way or other she considered him responsible for the attempt on her husband's life, which ended in the killing of Roy Pallister. She had never lost confidence in Flomerfelt's ability to win the battle that he and she were waging against her husband. There had been a time, it must be acknowledged, when she had looked up to and admired Wilkinson, but that feeling had long since passed off and had been replaced by one of tolerance and fear. Now she despised the man—despised him the more because she believed that Flomerfelt would circumvent him. A poor judge of character, as she was—a woman whose only end and aim in life was to feed her own desires—she saw nothing save unsuccessful clumsiness in Wilkinson's move at this time, and had naught but admiration for Flomerfelt's promised finesse.

"You do need me?" she asked, taking refuge in tears. And she was rewarded by a sudden half-reluctant change in his manner, for he said soothingly:

"I suppose I do, but not as far as your husband is concerned. Peter V., in or out of prison, is sewed up, done up; he's in our hands. Our fight is with a woman." And even before the last word was spoken he noted that she seemed to be impressing upon herself the possibility of such a contingency. "I suppose you know," he went on, "did Peter V. tell you that Leslie had refused Governor Beekman?"

"The girl's a fool!" exclaimed her stepmother. "If she halts at marrying a governor—I'd marry Beekman—I'd marry any governor in the land! I've been all wrong in thinking that money will do everything in New York! A millionaire's wife is nobody, unless . . . Now if I were a statesman's wife, they'd have to recognise me—I'd show them!"

"You don't suppose that she wants *me,* do you?" Flomerfelt said, putting into his voice as much tenderness as he dared.

Mrs. Peter V. shook her head, laughing scornfully in spite of herself.

"Some day, perhaps, we can make her like you, when I'm through liking you myself," she replied.

"You?" scowled Flomerfelt.

The woman shivered at his tone.

"What reason does she give?" she asked, wisely changing the subject.

Then Flomerfelt went on to explain with a grim smile what he thought of the deep-laid plans of Colonel Morehead, the schemes of Wilkinson and how they had all gone for naught, ending with:

"She's a born fighter, that Leslie, and it's she that we're up against, and not Wilkinson. Now the sooner Peter V. wins his fight, the better for us: but this minx is blocking him, though I admire her for it, I must say."

"We'll make her marry Beekman," declared Mrs. Peter V.

The woman's confidence in her own powers brought a sarcastic smile to his lips.

"It isn't a part of my game that she shall marry him," he argued. "The essential thing is that she shall engage herself to him. I say that she will never marry him."

"But Beekman can't be put out of the way as easily as——"

"There has been too much blundering already," said Flomerfelt, gloatingly, for the look of fear in her eyes had not escaped him. For a moment that seemed minutes they were silent. Finally Flomerfelt announced: "The long and short of it is that I don't intend that this Beekman shall marry her, and you've got to help me."

"Of course," said the lady, rejoicing that at last her services would be brought into play. "But how? What would you suggest?"

". . . That you go and see him secretly," he told her, and then proceeded to unfold his plan of what she should say to him.

"You'll go now?" he asked, observing the readiness in which she lent herself to his scheme, "and I'll go with you, that is, part way."

And in no way concerned as to the outcome of her dishonourable action—so confident was she of Flomerfelt's ability to carry out any project that he might undertake—Mrs. Peter V., without the slightest compunction, swept out of the room to make ready for their little excursion to Beekman's apartments. In a surprisingly short space of time she came back arrayed in a long fur motor-coat and a hat perched upon her head with a rakishness that she thought quite smart, but which, in reality, had not the remotest chance of success unless worn by a very young and pretty girl. And notwithstanding the fact that her eyes were over-bright, as were her cheeks, there was no lack of self-satisfaction in the manner in which she carried herself as together they passed out through the entrance door, stepped into her limousine, and were off.

But scarcely had the limousine passed out of sight of the house than Jeffries was summoned to the door once more.

"It's Mr. Beekman back again, Miss Leslie," were the words with which the butler interrupted Wilkinson's insistence that Leslie should listen to his final command; "and he says that he must see you at once."

Wilkinson's eyes gleamed as he snapped out:

"See him again, Leslie, and patch things up. Mind you, if you don't take him, I'll drag you to him and make you."

Frightened lest he should see Beekman before she saw him herself, for she realised that her father was desperate for some unknown reason and quite capable of carrying out his threat, Leslie swept on past Jeffries and into the room where Beekman was waiting, his eyes bright with a new hope.

"Idiot that I was, Leslie," he began breathlessly, "I was half way home before I came to my senses. Then in a flash I saw it all—no, you can't fool me this time. The whole trouble is your father's troubles. Come, confess!"

"But I've already confessed," she said. And so she had, though not in the way she intended, for her eyes told the story.

It was, therefore, with no uncertain tread, but rather with a sudden warmth and force that seemed to take possession of him, body and soul, that he continued:

"Look here, little one, this is a matter between

you and me and no one else. You must consider no one, but remember only that I represent to you the one man in all the world for you, as you stand for the only woman in the world for me: for I love you, Leslie, and I know that you love me."

There had been times when Eliot Beekman had stood before and pleaded with reluctant juries and judges whose faces were dead set against him, but his task then had been nothing compared with the one now. And yet so well did he plead his case, that when he had finished it was as he had told her: she forgot her father's sentence, forgot everything, except that she loved him, and that he was the one man in all the world for her.

"I believe you," she confessed to him in a whisper; "I believe you are right. Would to heaven that you had given me the chance to say this to you months ago."

"You've loved me all the time?" he asked, his pulse beating fast.

"Yes," she answered, "and I knew that you loved me."

The next instant he had brought out the ring which she had refused to accept, a little while before, and holding out her hand impulsively Leslie let him put it on.

There was a pause in which she looked first at the ring and then at the man before her, the meaning of it all slowly dawning upon her. And

then in some sudden outburst of rapture she let herself be held in his arms as their lips met in one long kiss. In that moment her heart went out to him, and she knew that there could never be anyone else for her. After a time she gently drew herself away from him, and said:

"My senses are coming back, Eliot, and this surrender is only on one condition, which is that there shall be no—no wedding—until, until father is cleared. . . . Of course, if you will not consent to this," and she toyed with the gem that sparkled on her finger, "then——"

"Hold on there, hold on!" cried Beekman. "I'll consent to anything so long as you're mine. . . ."

"All over, is it, Eliot?" came in a big voice from somewhere behind them.

The pair of lovers sprang apart like two persons caught in the act of concocting some conspiracy. The interloper was the girl's father.

"I thought," went on Wilkinson, more gently now, "that I'd drop in before the news went over the wire. Leslie's been opening up her heart to me—letting me in on her troubles, and I agree with her, though it's your own affair, of course. I'd keep the engagement quiet, for the present."

"That is precisely what I want; in fact I insist upon it," said Leslie, tugging at the ring on her finger.

Beekman watched her struggles in alarm.

"I consent to anything, just so long as I am sure you're mine, that you belong to me," he repeated.

Wilkinson held out his hand, saying:

"I'll make myself scarce and let you make sure in your own way that she does belong to you, Governor Beekman. Clinch the bargain, my boy; strike while the iron's hot; make hay while the sun shines."

A moment more and Wilkinson had ambled off to smoke another black cigar and to pat himself upon the back, while the happy pair, heedful of his advice, in the dim light of the music-room proceeded to make hay while the sun shone, even though without the November storm raged above the Hudson.

It was a night to be marked with a white stone for them, a happy memory in the days to come. For the time was not far distant when the sun for them would cease to shine, when the storm was to rage within these two as it now raged without the big house on the Drive.

XVII

On a bright snappy morning of the following Spring, Governor Beekman, reaching his private room in the Capitol at Albany a little ahead of time, began to pace slowly up and down in front of the open windows. A wonderfully pleasant place the world seemed to him now. However much his ambition might grope forward in the future, the present was eminently satisfactory. All his struggles seemed to lie behind him; before him he saw power, pleasant ways, and Leslie Wilkinson.

His private secretary, on time to the minute, broke in on his thoughts.

"This came in last night, Governor," he said, "after you'd left. I read it over."

"What is it?" asked the Governor, absent-mindedly.

"It's a petition for pardon," said the other casually, handing it to the Governor.

"What's the conviction," asked the latter, glancing at the document.

"Murder in the first degree," was the answer. Beekman frowned. Out of many applications this was the first he had received in a murder case.

"The game of Governor isn't all beer and skittles, is it, Phillips?"

"I'll change with you any time you say, Governor," laughed Phillips; and a moment later he added: "This is the case of Giles Ilingsworth."

"And who is Giles Ilingsworth?"

"Don't you remember that Tri-State Trust Company affair? The vice-president who shot a man named Pallister."

"Of course, Phillips, now I remember it very well. But I never took much interest in his case. Have they sent the record up—the printed case?"

"Yes, and the Hon. Worth Higgins, of New York, is waiting to see you, Governor Beekman. He came up yesterday—was at the Remsen last night."

"So he was. I remember now seeing him this morning, eating breakfast. I thought he looked at me as if something were in the wind. Tell him to come in, Phillips; I'll see him right away."

Bearing underneath his arm a printed book, the Hon. Worth Higgins entered the arena of events with his accustomed energy. He bowed low to the Governor, placed a high silk hat on the Governor's table, and settled down into a sea

"Have you read my petition?" he asked of the Governor.

"I looked at it," replied the other. "You have

a choice assortment of names upon it—looks all right."

"It is all right," declared Higgins, "I can assure you."

"I have just fifteen minutes," said the Governor. "I'll take this matter up with you with pleasure. Give me the printed case. Now point out to me—the evidence must have been brief on the exact point—the testimony relating to the crime. Remember I don't want your own private opinion, I want merely the salient facts of the case." And after glancing quickly over the pages that Higgins selected, he then wandered through the testimony on his own account. At sight of the name of Leslie Wilkinson in the printed index of the witnesses, Governor Beekman was conscious of a shock; nevertheless he turned to her testimony and to that of Wilkinson.

"Seems to have been deliberation all right," he remarked. "But wasn't there a gun store clerk upon the stand? I was in Austria at the time, and I lost track of this case."

Higgins, his countenance falling, pointed out the exact testimony. The Governor solemnly shook his head, as he observed:

"And here, Mr. Higgins, are three witnesses in the crowd who say that they saw him fire the fatal shot. What have you to say to that?"

"Ah!" exclaimed the Hon. Worth Higgins, his

spirits rising, "that is just the point. If you will examine the cross-examination, blundering though it be, of my colleague Boggs, you will find that those three witnesses cannot give a correct account of themselves. They were not depositors—that much we showed: they were hangers-on of Mulberry Bend resorts."

"These three men," returned the Governor, "do not stand impeached by Boggs, that much is sure; and, besides, this was Ilingsworth's gun. How do you get away from that?"

Now Higgins, be it known, was not secretly in sympathy with this errand of his. He knew instinctively that his mission would fail. He preferred successful missions, and consequently he had balked. But he had outlined a plan whereby he would sit down before the Governor and make his plea, and then retire, leaving the rest to fate. So that he had not come prepared to answer vital questions, and they annoyed him. Besides, he knew and felt that Ilingsworth had been convicted on the merits of the case. Appeals had failed; this petition to the Governor was a last resort. Nevertheless, he started in to tell the Governor the story his petition set forth—a story of the wrongs of Ilingsworth.

Governor Beekman listened patiently to him for a few minutes, then he said:

"But this man Ilingsworth ran away, too, didn't

he? In my mind that refutes even this question of quasi-insanity that you set up. You were beaten on insanity, beaten on everything."

Once more the Governor took up the petition and glanced at the names subscribed on it. When he came to the name of Nathan Ougheltree of the National Banks, he smiled and said: "He heads the list." And running his finger further down the long line of names, he added sardonically: "Instead of being People vs. Ilingsworth, it looks like Ougheltree against Wilkinson—the National Banks against the Trust Companies. At least it does to me, Mr. Higgins; how does it look to you?"

The Hon. Worth Higgins flushed to his eyelids.

"My dear Governor," he said reprovingly, "a man's life is at stake."

"I understand that, Counsellor," returned the Governor. "I'm just trying to figure out just how much you and Ougheltree care about the man's life, that's all. I'll take your papers," he went on, "and have no fear, I'll go over this thing carefully, give the man the benefit of every reasonable doubt, and that's the best I can do."

"You'll pardon him, Governor Beekman," said Higgins, placing his silk hat upon his head, and lighting a cigar. "You'll pardon him, I predict. Good-day!"

Higgins's head was held high in the air until he left the room, but once outside he conversed dejectedly with his own inner consciousness.

"What the devil did Ougheltree send me on this fool errand for!" he protested. "Ilingsworth's done for; anyhow, he's served our purpose. The *Morning Mail* has had him for a weapon against Wilkinson long enough."

On Church Street he stepped into a telephone booth and called up Ougheltree in Manhattan.

"What luck?" queried the National Bank man.

At his end of the line Higgins chuckled.

"You can lay this unction to your soul," he replied. "There's no hope. Besides," unconsciously lowering his voice, "this man B. is Wilkinson's man from top to toe. I did what I could."

"Nobody could do more," conceded Ougheltree at the other end; "let it go at that."

No sooner was the interview between Higgins and the Governor at an end than the latter's private secretary tiptoed his way back into the room, and remarked:

"You're not through with that Ilingsworth case yet. Somebody else wants to see you—a woman, this time."

"His wife, I suppose," said the Governor, wearily.

Phillips shook his head.

"Ilingsworth was a widower," he explained.

"It must be his daughter, then—he has a daughter, so it seems," he said, tapping the printed case. "Doesn't she give her name? No? Well, tell her to come in, then."

The private secretary went out as directed, and a moment later the new visitor entered.

In a glance the Governor saw that although she was simply and poorly clad, she was a woman of great beauty; and presently he said:

"You are Miss Ilingsworth?"

The woman turned her lustrous dark blue eyes full upon him—eyes full of sorrow, full of appeal; they troubled the Governor.

"I am not Miss Illingsworth," she returned in a strong, rich, full voice, vibrant with pathos. "I have no card. My name in Madeline Braine. I'm a saleswoman in Satterthwaite's department store in New York."

The Governor looked at her questioningly.

"I was informed that you had received the Ilingsworth papers," she began, going right to the point, "and that Mr. Higgins had been here to see you. I have come about it, too."

The Governor drew a chair forward for her; and the young woman leaning across a table, her figure half-resting lightly upon it, her slender arm stretching toward him, continued:

"Yes, I have come to plead for Giles Ilings-

worth, to save him from——" She stopped suddenly, and for an instant her eyes held the other's glance.

"Who sent you here?" presently asked the Governor.

"I came of my own accord, sir."

"You are not allied with the Ougheltree crowd?" he asked, and his eyes narrowed.

Madeline Braine opened hers wide.

"What Ougheltree crowd?" she queried in return.

"Come, come," he said a bit impatiently, "you must know what I mean. I've heard all about this Ilingsworth case. It's been a handle in the hands of a lot of people for the purpose of hounding Peter V. Wilkinson."

"Peter V. Wilkinson," she breathed, a sharp note of enmity in her tone that the Governor recognised for the thing it was.

"Ah, you know something of what I say?" he said.

"I have heard," she began.

"Then why do you come here?" he interrupted testily.

Madeline Braine leaned toward him a bit closer, persisting:

"Because I know that this man Ilingsworth isn't guilty."

"How do you know it?" he asked.

"I just know," she replied with feminine logic.

"You think he was insane? That seems to be the chief argument of his friends."

"He isn't guilty of the murder, that's all," she declared, her eyes glittering for an instant.

"I wish you'd tell me how you know this?" asked the Governor, firmly. He was fast getting out of patience with her.

"Because I've heard him tell his story, and I know it's true," she insisted stubbornly.

"But twelve men heard his story," went on the Governor, disturbed out of his gubernatorial dignity by her evident distress, "and they felt it wasn't true."

"They didn't hear it as I heard it," she declared with great earnestness. "You ought to hear it from him—not read it. Just hear the sound of his voice, see his face, his eyes! You'd believe him—you'd know it was true."

The Governor was interested, not only at her words, but at her forceful manner; moreover, he was attracted not a little by the young woman's great beauty. Presently he asked:

"You were in the crowd the day of the murder? Or perhaps you know someone who was?" But both these questions she answered negatively.

The Governor was puzzled. Dealing with the Honourable Worth Higgins had been an easy matter compared to this. Nevertheless, there was a

wonderfully convicing stubbornness about the woman that disturbed him.

"You think he had a fair trial?" he asked, flirting the leaves of the printed case. "It seems to me he had."

"No," she answered, "he did not. . . ." And then she went on to give her reasons why she thought this, ending with: "The three witnesses out of the crowd—the three men who were procured by the police, and who swore they saw Illingsworth fire the shot—those men lied."

The Governor started.

"Isn't it rather queer that Counsellor Higgins should have harped on that very thing! You've talked to Higgins this morning, or perhaps some other time, about this case, haven't you?"

"I have talked to no one," was her answer, and, somehow, the Governor felt that she spoke the truth.

"Leaving out the question of those three men," he went on, "there's enough proof—the gun, the threats—to have convicted him on circumstantial evidence."

"Another reason is," she continued, heedless of his remark, "that the influence of Peter V. Wilkinson, and especially," she hesitated for an instant, "the testimony of Miss Leslie Wilkinson were too strong in the case—too much importance was attached to them."

At the mention of Leslie's name the Governor winced. Not so much because of her connection with the case, but he blamed himself for permitting his thoughts, for one instant, to rest on this woman to the exclusion of the other.

"Their testimony," he argued, "was entitled to weight. It was true; and it established these threats . . . I can't see. . . ."

But there was such genuine distress and anguish on her face, and she seemed to be advocating such a losing cause that he pitied her, and was wondering just how he could assist her, when suddenly she leaned closer to him, her breast swelling, heaving against the polished surface of the table; and placing her ungloved hand upon his, while with the other she pushed towards him a closely-written memorandum, she said in soft, swelling tones:

"Governor Beekman, I know this man is innocent. See what I have done: This is a list of men who have been sent to death by juries, courts of appeals, in times past—innocent men, like Ilingsworth, condemned by the world, while living, and acquitted only when it was too late. This man Ilingsworth is not guilty, I say," she concluded, tightening her grasp on his arm, while her gaze held his.

The Governor's frame thrilled at her touch.

"I would not say this, Governor Beekman," she

resumed, still holding his glance, "if I were not desperate, but if there is anything I can do for you, if there's anything in my power to give, I'll do it if you will set this man free."

The Governor felt the warmth of her hand through his sleeve, yet there was nothing of the temptress in her touch, but rather she had become a desperate woman, the apotheosis of self-sacrifice, a Monna Vanna, stopping at nothing to gain her virtuous object.

"I don't know you," she went on softly, with downcast eyes, "but if there's anything about me —do with me——"

Suddenly she stopped. The door had opened, and a girl stood framed in the doorway. But although the Governor paled perceptibly, he did not move. After a moment the woman removed her hand from his arm, quietly rose and stood facing the girl who had entered.

"Governor Beekman," she said, now turning to him, her face still appealing in its pathos, her arms half stretched toward him, "I'm coming here every day, whether you will see me or not. I'm coming until you consent to see this man Ilingsworth and hear from him the truth. You must see him, you must hear his story from his lips," she concluded, holding out her hand.

"I will say to you precisely what I told Mr. Higgins," he replied, taking her hand and bowing

gravely over it. "I shall consider this matter fully and faithfully, and shall give Giles Ilingsworth the benefit of every reasonable doubt."

When the woman had finally gone, Leslie came forward laughing, but with just enough nervousness showing in her laugh to startle Beekman, and remarked:

"Take care, take care, Eliot, some of them will get you if you don't watch out!"

By this time the Governor had thrown off the subtle influence of the woman, and smiling, too, he answered:

"Let me tell you all about it, Leslie," and proceeded to do so, despite her protests that she didn't care to hear it. During his recital, however, she broke in with:

"She's awfully attractive, Eliot, to say the least!"

"To tell you the truth, Leslie," he laughed, "I'm not quite sure how far her influence upon me is going to go."

"Surely you don't mean——" began Leslie, but Beekman joined in quickly, soberly, honestly saying:

"Just this: that if she persists, it may result in my seeing Giles Ilingsworth."

"Oh!" The interjection plainly showing her relief. But a moment more and she had recalled Colonel Morehead's warnings that under no cir-

cumstances was Beekman to be permitted to hear Ilingsworth's story from his own lips.

Immediately, therefore, to Beekman's surprise, the reserve that had marked her manner dissolved, and she cried:

"Eliot, don't see him! Please don't see him, Eliot!"

"But why not?" he inquired, smiling.

"Because I don't want you to," she told him.

"Leslie! Surely you're not trying to pit your influence against hers? What?" he said, his smile changing to an expression of slight annoyance.

"No, indeed," she replied. "It's something else."

"Why, then?"

"That's the trouble—I don't know. Only, he was, is still, my father's enemy. Oh, I have seen his fury—he mean't murder—he did murder. . . ."

"It is because the case is a murder case," explained the Governor, "that it troubles me. It's the first murder case since my election, and really, I don't know—I can't promise anything now."

Madeline Braine lived up to her promises. Day after day for a week she had waited persistently in the Governor's ante-room, buoyed up with the hope that eventually he would accede to her wishes. At last her patience was rewarded: for

the Governor, passing through the room where she waited, suddenly announced to his private secretary that he would consent to an interview with Ilingsworth the following day at noon. And turning to the woman, he added:

"I want you here, Miss Braine, too."

Phillips, the Governor's private secretary, frowned to himself. Unknown to the Governor, he was one of Wilkinson's most faithful men—placed at the Governor's side apparently by the Governor's untrammelled choice—but actually forced upon him without his own knowledge.

"I don't like this a little bit," thought Phillips to himself. "It looks bad, bad. . . ."

The following day punctually at noon, in obedience to the mandate of the Governor, three men marched into the waiting-room at the Capitol. Two were men in uniform; one in civilian's dress.

"You can go right in," said the secretary, nodding to them. And passing into the Governor's private office they found him at his desk, signing some papers. In a corner sat Miss Madeline Braine. One of the uniformed officers stood at attention, waiting until the Governor should look up.

"This is Giles Ilingsworth, sir," he said at length.

Instantly the Governor raised his eyes and looked at the prisoner—a man whose hair was

turning grey, whose aspect was pathetically hopeless. And steeling himself against the sight—for it was within the range of possibility that all murderers looked this way, guilty or not,—he ordered him to sit down, and pointing to a seat, he added:

"Mr. Ilingsworth, take this chair, please."

The chair had been placed so that the light shone full upon the face of the condemned man. And the instant that Ilingsworth had seated himself, some new expression crossed the face of the Governor as unconsciously he placed his hand against his forehead. In an instant, however, he had removed it, and his glance went from Ilingsworth to the young woman sitting in the corner, at the same time motioning to her to come forward.

"Mr. Ilingsworth," he began gently, "the fact that I have consented to see you is due to your friend, Miss Madeline Braine."

The prisoner turned an expressionless countenance toward the girl.

"My friend, Miss Madeline Braine!" he exclaimed, his hand, too, creeping along his own forehead. "I have no friend of the name Braine."

"You may not know her by that name, but this is the lady," said the Governor.

Giles Ilingsworth stared hard at her; the next instant he announced:

"I don't know this lady, sir."

The Governor was startled afresh.

"You don't know her? Why, she's been pleading for you for days."

Ilingsworth smiled gratefully, murmuring:

"Some young newspaper woman, I suppose. I thank her for it."

The Governor shook his head.

"She's not a newspaper woman—I know that," he returned. "I mistook her for your daughter."

Giles Ilingsworth struggled wildly to his feet, and brushing his hair roughly from his forehead as he leaned over the Governor's desk and looked him full in the eye, he cried:

"My daughter! My daughter——"

"Stop!" ordered the Governor in commanding tones, the puzzled look on his face giving way to one of recognition, relief.

"I've placed you now—yes, by Jove, I'm right—I know you!" He laughed with the surprise of it all.

Ilingsworth continued to stare vacantly into space.

"'And the rest by the names underneath,'" quoted the Governor, touching him on the arm, as though to arouse him.

"Eh?" exclaimed the prisoner, working his fingers convulsively through his hair.

"Listen to this!" And the Governor recited with almost boyish glee:

> "'I recognise Dante because he's tab-eared,
> And Virgil I know by his wreath,
> Old Homer I tell by his rough shaggy beard—
> And the rest *by the names underneath*.'

"Don't you remember it?" he added, when he had finished the verse.

Ilingsworth's face lighted up.

"Why, sir," he cried, "it's my favourite. Where did you hear it?"

"From your own lips," replied the Governor. "And at the same time you showed me that,"—and he pointed with his finger to the spot where the old man had brushed away his hair from his forehead—"the Heidelberg scar upon your head. And you were reading Dante at the time."

Ilingsworth pulled a thumb-worn volume out of his pocket.

"I've that copy of the Inferno yet," he murmured sadly. "It keeps reminding me. . . . My daughter"—he peered uncertainly at the Governor. "I'm curious to know, sir, when I met you. I can't seem to place you."

"But I remember you very well indeed," rejoined the Governor. "I rode with you all day long to Buffalo, some months ago. We were on the Empire State Express together."

"Buffalo?" said Ilingsworth. "I never went to Buffalo."

"Oh, yes, you did," persisted the Governor; and drawing from his breast-pocket a diary he turned over the leaves rapidly until he came to a certain page. "Yes, you went to Buffalo on the 27th day of April, 190—that's the date."

"I can't seem to remember it," was all that Ilingsworth said; but at that moment a figure sprang towards the Governor, and a voice cried in his ear:

"The date—what was that date? The twenty-seventh day of what?"

"April."

"Please repeat it."

The Governor repeated it.

"Are you absolutely sure?" she cried.

"Of course," he answered. "Why?"

"And you say you took the Empire State Express?" demanded Madeline Braine, almost beside herself with excitement. "What time does it leave in the morning?"

"It leaves always at the same time—eight-thirty in the morning."

"It was an all-day ride?"

"Yes."

"And Giles Ilingsworth was near you all the way? You're sure that you were with him on the

Empire State Express at eleven o'clock—eleven in the morning that day?"

"Surely I was."

Madeline Braine offered up a silent prayer.

"I knew, I knew," she cried, "that there must be some way out of this! Giles Ilingsworth was miles away at the time when Pallister was killed! The murder took place on April 27th at eleven o'clock in the morning, at the very instant when you and he were riding to Buffalo as fast as steam could carry you! You——"

She sank into her chair and covered her face with her hands.

"I told you he was innocent," she said, smiling through her tears.

There was a tense moment in which Governor Beekman, the prisoner and the two officers stood staring at each other in speechless amazement.

"Can it be possible . . . !" exclaimed the Governor at length, and again he consulted his diary. All of a sudden something else on the page that he was looking at caught his eye, and he cried out:

"It was at six o'clock that evening in the Iroquois that I read the murder in the papers. It was that day—it was. . . ." And a moment later he was at his desk rapidly leafing over the printed case for the date of the commission of the crime.

There was no mistake about it. Every witness had it pat. Repeatedly in his opening address and in his summing up the District Attorney had referred to it; three times it appeared in the Court's charge to the jury.

"Phillips," he directed, when his secretary appeared, "call up my office in New York; call up the District Attorney's office in New York; and call up the Bank Le Boeuf in Buffalo. Get them right away, please."

The calls were answered quickly. Once the people at the other end knew the Governor of New York was on the wire, everything was put aside to do his bidding; and at the end of an hour the Governor sank back into his chair with a sigh of satisfaction.

"There is not the slightest doubt about it," he told them. "At the very time the shot was fired in Lafayette Street, New York, this man was with me miles away from the spot." He looked at the officers significantly. "When was he to be——" He broke off, shuddering at the thought of the man's narrow escape.

"Next week Thursday," came from the officers.

Beekman thought for some time. Finally he said:

"I'll grant him a reprieve for a month. It may take a week to verify the facts."

When the prisoner had been led away, the Gov-

ernor turned to Madeline Braine, and said with great feeling:

"Miss Braine, I owe you a debt of gratitude I can never repay. If it hadn't been for you I would have sent this man to his doom—and one of these days, when it was too late, I would have found it out, and then. . . ." His finger-nails bit into his palms. "You've saved me from the Inferno that he harps upon."

But much to the Governor's surprise, the woman before him seemed to receive this remark listlessly. An unaccountable depression was upon her; there was no fire in her eyes; and the hand that she gave to him was cold as ice. Yet, instinctively he felt that she must be grateful.

"If I can ever be of service"—she murmured. But Beekman interrupted her.

"Pardon me, it is I who wish to be of some service to you. But will you tell me," he asked, another thought coming into his mind, "how it was that you didn't know Ilingsworth, and that he didn't know you? How do you account for it, Miss Braine?"

"I think this day has taught us that there are many unaccountable things in life, hasn't it, Governor?"

And the Governor, when once more seated alone at his desk, was forced to acknowledge to himself that it had.

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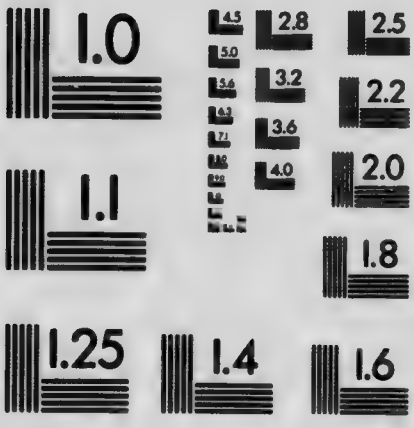

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Governor Beekman was still at his desk going over some papers when Phillips, some time later, came in and handed him a telegram, saying:

"It's in cipher, sir."

"Cipher!" said the other. "Why cipher? I have no code with anybody. Can you read it?"

"It says 'Coal gone to $6.50 retail.'" And passing it over, added: "It's signed, M. X. Y. Z."

"And you say that's a cipher?" asked the Governor.

"Yes. The X. Y. Z. means the X. Y. Z. Code, apparently," explained Phillips, glibly. "I have the A. B. C. and the X. Y. Z. in my desk. I translated it while you were busy. It means this: 'Court has affirmed Wilkinson conviction. Morehead.'"

Governor Beekman started with genuine anxiety.

"The deuce you say! I'm sorry, very sorry, to hear that," he said; but Phillips only smiled—a smile that the Governor did not see. "I can't understand why they affirm that conviction, I can't—I can't . . . ." he kept saying to himself. Then aloud to his secretary: "Get me a copy of that opinion, will you, Phillips? I want to see it, word for word."

And it was with considerable satisfaction that the private secretary observed, as he left the room, that the Governor was nervously pacing to and fro.

XVIII

In Colonel Morehead's office at 120 Broadway, Peter V. Wilkinson sat at the window reading a typewritten document of considerable length. He was white and rigid; while Leslie, standing beside him, rested her arm upon his shoulder. As he read he stirred uneasily, even his daughter's hand felt heavy upon him, and he shrugged it off.

"By all the gods!" he groaned from time to time; "those chaps have nerve to say such things about me!"

"They seem to have the right," said the Colonel, suppressing a chuckle, "and I suppose we can't complain."

When Peter V. had finished reading the opinion, he wiped his face with his kerchief—the perspiration had started from every pore.

"That's the last crack, I suppose, Morehead," he ventured.

Morehead did not immediately answer, but turned to Leslie and said:

"There's a new Inness in the next room that I picked up at a bargain. Would you like——" And without waiting for her answer the Colonel

led the way to an adjoining room, where he pointed out briefly to her the artistic features of his new acquisition, and leaving her to admire it, he came back, closing the door behind him.

"Peter," he said softly, "how much money have you squandered on this business in the last year—since you were indicted, convicted and so forth. I mean outside of what you haven't paid me and of what I know about?"

Wilkinson grunted in disgust.

"Ten, I should say."

"Millions?"

His client fumed and nodded.

Morehead made a gesture of impatience which included the other.

"Didn't I warn you, Peter, that it would be of no use? That at the end of the race you'd find yourself with a ten-years' sentence staring you in the face. You might have saved your money, or given it to me, preferably the latter course."

"Oh, come, Morehead, what's the use of these post mortems of yours! Let's get to work. How much time have we got?"

"I can get a few certificates of reasonable doubt —that part's all right—run it along for months yet. We've got to concede, however, that they shoved it along mighty quick. What I'm trying to figure out is whether we hadn't better apply to Beekman now—strike while the iron's hot. For

that opinion will make him mad, and if so, now is our time. . . ."

"Sure it's our time, Colonel; let's do it right away."

Morehead slipped into the next room and adjusted the window-shade.

"The light is a little better, now, Miss Leslie. I want you to like that picture. If you like it well enough, maybe I'll give it to you one of these days. . . ."

Leslie smiled her gratitude, glancing anxiously at the same time into the next room.

"Can I go back to father now?" she asked.

"Of course, I came to get you," said Colonel Morehead; and when they were back in the room in which her father waited, the Colonel, lounging easily in his seat, went on to confide to her the fact that her father was at last in desperate straits; that this opinion constituted his last chance with the courts.

"Your father and I have been talking it over," he said in a tone of finality; "and the hand of the National Banks sticks up like a sore finger all through the case. It's an outrage! We've decided that this is the proper time and the proper case to present to Governor Beekman for pardon. What do you think. . . .?"

At first, while Morehead was explaining, as well as he knew how, the unpleasant situation that

her father was in, Leslie had half-risen in her chair, her face growing white; but at the lawyer's concluding words her colour came back.

"Why, I—I never thought of that!" she cried out, her troubles slipping from her suddenly.

Colonel Morehead smiled at her until she lowered her eyes in confusion. Afterwards he deigned to explain that neither had they until just now.

"Providence," put in Wilkinson, winking at Colonel Morehead, "seems to be on our side—the appellate courts to the contrary notwithstanding."

"The right shall prevail," quoth Morehead, unblushingly.

"Isn't it funny," exclaimed Leslie, "that none of us ever thought of this before!"

Leslie thought of it a good deal afterwards, however, and the very next day in the Mastodon car she canvassed in person practically every house upon the Drive and over on Fifth Avenue to get the list of signatures that the Colonel wished her to obtain.

"This has got to be done right, Miss Leslie," he impressed upon her. "For when Eliot pardons your father, remember that he's got to show why he does it, and upon whose petition."

"You mean"—she faltered, "that he may be criticised?"

"It's quite possible, my dear. The *Morning Mail,* for instance, will doubtless roast him from here to Gehenna and back again."

Leslie's smile of girlish confidence returned.

"Eliot won't mind," she said. "I don't believe he cares much about anything except me. He'll do right by us no matter what happens, I feel sure of that."

"And I think," suggested the Colonel, "that when we hand in our petitions, we'll all go up together."

"Leslie laughed in sheer delight.

"Of course we'll all go up together," she returned. "Our march to victory."

"That man Ilingsworth is here again," Phillips told the Governor, somewhat reluctantly; "and he wants to see you."

"Show him in," briskly returned his chief. "I'll be delighted to see him."

Ilingsworth came in slowly, dejectedly, alone. No guard was with him; the air he breathed was free air, and yet there were no signs of contentment.

"I didn't come exactly to thank you, Governor," he said uneasily. "I did that in my letter when they told me of my pardon. I came to you because in all my life you are the only man who

ever really helped me—for it seems to have been the mission of other men to drag me down. I have come for help once more."

"I want to help you, Mr. Ilingsworth," volunteered the Governor. "What's the trouble? Is it—money?"

Ilingsworth slowly shook his head.

"No, it is not money. . . ." He paused and looked about him uncertainly, murmuring to himself: "What is it that I want?"

Beekman touched him kindly.

"You seem to lose yourself at times," he remarked. "For instance, you didn't remember that trip to Buffalo."

"That's the only time I ever lost myself, I guess," was his answer. "If I hadn't lost myself then, I suppose I could have proved an alibi. I couldn't account for myself upon my trial, and nobody who knew me had seen me for a few days. I must have knocked about Buffalo and come back."

"You were looking for [illegible]"

"Yes, you told me that [illegible]mes back to me now. And there was a [illegible] but it's all very vague—a farm some years ago somewhere up there. I had the notion to find it and to live on it—just myself and——" he broke off abruptly, and there was a new light in his eyes and a world of pathos in the voice that said: "It's my daugh-

ter that I want to see you about. I want to find her. Can't you help me to find her?"

"Don't you know where she is?"

"I haven't seen her for, oh, so long—so long. When they put me away she would come to the Tombs—twice she came up the River to see me. But the last time there was something in her face I couldn't understand, then she never came again, and I knew they'd got her. For she had to get along, somehow, and she didn't dare to face me. Poor girl, there was no one to care for her—see to her!" And then all of a sudden flaring up out of his downcast demeanour, he cried:

"Curse them! Curse that man Wilkinson—all of them! First they robbed me of my money, then they got me, and now they've got her!"

The Governor's eyes narrowed.

"What has Wilkinson to do with it?" he demanded.

"Why, don't you know?" Ilingsworth burst out excitedly. "Doesn't everybody know? Didn't you read my testimony at the trial?"

"Only hurriedly," acknowledged the Governor. "What I wanted to read first was the case made against you. I read your own denial—but as for the rest, well, you were rambling, somewhat incoherent. I didn't understand it—in fact I hardly read it all."

Ilingsworth dragged up a chair.

"Will you let me tell you, sir, all about it?"

Governor Beekman let him tell his story. And scarcely had the last words of Ilingsworth's recital of his wrongs left his lips than Phillips, entering, announced:

"Colonel Morehead and some friends to see you, sir!"

"Bring them right in!" exclaimed the Governor, at once rising and going with a smile to meet them. Suddenly he remembered Ilingsworth and started to escort that gentleman out of another entrance.

"But my daughter," mumbled Ilingsworth as with bowed head he followed the Governor. "If I can't have her back again, why, what's the good of a pardon? I must have help to find her." At the door something impelled him to pause, and looking back he found himself face to face with Peter V. Wilkinson.

"That's the man—there—the man that got my money—that's got my daughter! No matter where she is, he's responsible! Look at him! Look at his face! I don't have to tell you. . . ."

But the Governor, startled by this outburst and intent upon getting rid of his visitor, did not turn, and consequently he did not see the face of Wilkinson blanche and twitch under the accusing forefinger of his old vice-president, Giles Ilingsworth.

"I'll help you find your daughter, sir," the

Governor promised, taking the man by the arm; "I'll help you all I can."

"Poor chap," said he, returning, and shaking hands with his guests, "seems to have it in for you, Mr. Wilkinson."

"I don't blame him having it in for somebody," spoke up Leslie. "It is not his innocence or guilt that interests me, but his daughter. I saw her picture once—saw her twice," she went on wistfully. "How I wish that I might help him. . . ."

Colonel Morehead, tucking the Ilingsworth incident into the back of his head for future use, laid down a batch of papers and his printed case upon the Governor's desk.

"Governor—Eliot," he remarked jovially, "the New York *Reporter* and the *Star* call you the pardoning Governor."

"Yes. They rapped me hard, didn't they," he said, all unconscious that they were Wilkinson's own papers. "But what could I do? The man Ilingsworth was innocent—I knew he was innocent."

"Oh, they didn't hit you very hard—just a little dig in the short ribs—friendly little scrap, don't you know," said Morehead, soothingly. "But the *Morning Mail* made up for it, my boy. They'll stick to you through thick and thin, and don't you forget it. It won't hurt you. Oughel-

tree's backing is not to be sneezed at by any man. But what I started in to say, Eliot, was, that since you're the pardoning Governor, so-called, why, we've got a little bone to pick with you—a petition—or petitions, rather, in the case of the People versus Wilkinson."

Colonel Morehead handed up his bunch of papers, Leslie following suit, as she said with a little smile:

"My contribution, Governor."

"A bit stiff, that U. S. Supreme decision," said the Governor, taking them, and looking at Wilkinson. "It seemed to me unnecessarily rough."

Wilkinson shrugged his shoulders.

"With the National Banks against me, how can the U. S. courts be for me—that's what I'd like to know?" he asked.

"Will you hear me now, Governor," interposed Morehead.

For an instant the Governor hesitated. Then he replied that he would send for him when he was ready; that he had to read the case all through, ending with:

"I've forgotten half of it. I'll read it and then I'll set a day. . . ."

But that day was long forthcoming. For it was not until three weeks later that Colonel Morehead heard anything relating to their visit to the

Governor in Albany. And then, one morning to his surprise, Governor Beekman presented himself at his office in Broadway, and handing him a personal memoranda, he said:

"I was down here and thought we'd clean these up first. I'm going to Murgatroyd's to look at the original exhibits when I'm through here—or he'll probably send them to my office."

The Colonel gave the man before him one long searching glance. He noted that the Governor's face was unnaturally flushed; there were deep lines on it; he had the appearance of an overworked man.

"Must have burned some midnight oil on this thing, Eliot?" said Morehead.

The Governor wearily drew his hand across his face.

"I have," he answered shortly.

"The first memo.," went on the Governor, referring to the printed case, "relates to page 121."

Morehead found page 121 and his face reddened perceptibly. The Governor had touched a sore spot: page 121 contained the first bit of damning documentary evidence against Wilkinson. Morehead ran through the other pages indicated on the memoranda; and closing his eyes for a few seconds, he pressed his hands against them and thought hard. The Governor had burnt midnight oil to some purpose: he had located every weak

place in Wilkinson's armour—and Morehead knew it.

"I merely want to find out what Wilkinson's explanation of all these things is," remarked the Governor, grimly.

"I'll tell you," said the Colonel, glibly; "that's easy, Eliot. Or, perhaps," he suggested in order to gain time, "we might get Wilkinson down here, and have him go over these things with you and me." Already his hand was on the telephone; but the Governor stayed it.

"Your explanation will do, Colonel."

For two hours the Governor listened to Morehead's explanation. At the end of that time the Governor was still leaning forward studying every expression in the other's face; but the lines were deeper in his own face, while on the Colonel's lean countenance small beads of perspiration stood forth.

"That's the explanation of it, is it, Colonel?" asked the Governor.

"That's the whole thing in a nut-shell," returned Morehead.

Hurriedly the Governor took his departure. He was nervous, anxious, worried.

"It seems to be the kind of an explanation that doesn't explain . . ." he told himself. Now he went back to his old office on Nassau Street and telephoned to Murgatroyd for the original ex-

hibits. At the Barristers' Club, behind locked doors, he examined the documents for hours. All night long he studied them; then he rose and gazed out into the grey dawn.

"Wilkinson is guilty!" he cried out; "damnably guilty! Why didn't I see it all before?"

There was a reason: Colonel Morehead had been right when he told Wilkinson that Beekman was partisan. And so long as his duty lay that way, Beekman was partisan. But now he was Governor; his duty in this case had become judicial; he saw with impartial eyes; and what he saw and what he read was not the mere testimony of witnesses, not evidence that depended on veracity, but documents whose genuineness was undisputed, and whose significance had strangely escaped him until now. In his own words, over his own signature, Wilkinson had convicted himself over and over again.

"Damnably guilty," he repeated to himself.

One evening some days later Colonel Morehead betook himself into the presence of Peter V. Wilkinson and his daughter Leslie. He had with him, he said, a note which had come from the Governor's private chambers, which he wished to read to them. It ran:

My dear Colonel:

I have examined with great care the petitions for pardon

in the People vs. Wilkinson. Also the printed record. There seem to be undisputed facts which are totally inconsistent with innocence. The verdict seems to have been justified, the decisions on appeal correct. There are no extenuating circumstances known to me which require executive interference.

Very truly,
ELIOT BEEKMAN.

"What the devil does he want?" growled Wilkinson, taking the letter from Morehead, and tossing it to Leslie. "Is it money or political preferment? Haven't I given him enough?" his anger increasing as he went on. "I made him——

"Stop!" cried Morehead, alarmed lest he should betray to her their political secret.

"I mean I gave him my daughter," corrected the father, "everything I had."

Morehead stared at them a moment from under knitted brows. Presently he said:

"Peter, I'd send Leslie to him. This letter is only tentative."

"It's a refusal," gasped Wilkinson, hopelessly.

"It's a denial to me," explained Colonel Morehead. "But wait until he sees her! He'll have something different to say to her, I know."

And so it happened that the following day Leslie Wilkinson arrived at Albany to interview her betrothed on her father's behalf.

"I came to talk to you, Eliot, about my father," she began.

Beekman swayed in his chair. His eyes seemed

sunken in his head, and his head ached from weariness and lack of sleep.

"Yes, Leslie," he said.

"Colonel Morehead didn't—couldn't understand what your letter meant, so I came to see."

"It means that I can't pardon your father, Leslie," he told her with great difficulty.

"Why not?"

"Because your father is guilty——"

"Eliot!" she cried, leaping back with flashing eyes.

"But I must speak the truth, Leslie," said the Governor, "and that's the truth."

There was a silence that lapsed into minutes. Beekman was the first to break it.

"Unfortunately for us all," he said, "I'm sworn to do my duty—I don't know that it makes much difference about my being sworn—I'd have to do it anyway."

"You defended him," she said with sudden spirit. "You believed him innocent then—you said so a thousand times."

"I defended him below," he returned, "because it was my duty to defend him. I had never seen any other side of the case then; but now I know I was wrong. He's guilty, deliberately guilty, wofully guilty. . . ."

"Eliot, must I remind you that you are speak-

ing of my father! Have I no right, no influence, no claim upon you?" she rattled on breathlessly.

"Yes, you have a claim upon me," he said, eyeing her sternly. "Your influence is of the best, Leslie, and it is your right, your duty to claim, to demand of me that I shall do my duty in this as in all things. If I were false in this, I would be false to you."

But Leslie could not see things in his light, bent as she was on obtaining her father's pardon.

"You pardoned Giles Ilingsworth?" she went on; "and now you won't . . ."

"Yes, I pardoned Giles Ilingsworth," he admitted.

"A murderer!" she blazed forth.

"I pardoned him because he was innocent," he insisted.

"And you can't pardon my father?"

Eliot Beekman did not answer at once, but hung his head under the girl's scrutinising gaze. She looked very beautiful, irresistibly beautiful to him pleading there, and for a moment he came perilously near to wavering in his purpose. He would have liked to have taken her in his arms, to have uttered the one word of all others that she wished to hear and to have sent her home happy. But, hard as it was to deny her, he knew from the first that it was impossible to grant her request.

"No, Leslie, I can't," he told her at last.

"Look at me!" she cried, now changing her tactics. "I haven't slept, I haven't eaten! Have you no pity for me—if not for him?"

"But, Leslie, you're asking me to commit a crime!"

"Just a stroke of the pen, dear, and my father will be free," she went on, half sobbing, half smiling. "It's his last chance—my last chance—surely you can't, you won't refuse me this."

Then followed a scene that lived in Beekman's memory for ever after—the memory of a woman, the woman he loved, crawling after him on her knees, pleading, almost writhing in agony, imploring him to do this impossible thing—a thing that, were it not for his conscience, was so ridiculously easy: merely the exercising of the authority vested in him, and solely in him, and thus save the father of the woman he loved from serving a term of ten years at hard labour in the State's Prison.

"Why was I ever Governor!" burst out Beekman.

"I'll tell you why," said Wilkinson, striding suddenly into the room. "It's because I made you Governor, that's why! I—I bought you the job—I——"

"You?" ejaculated Beek[illegible]n.

"Yes, it is true," said F[illegible]erfelt, gliding also into the scene. "You owe it all to Peter V."

"Now you've got to do it!" exclaimed Leslie, staggering to her feet.

Beekman eyed them all with growing determination. He was beginning to see things clearly now.

"I even gave you my daughter, confound you!" went on Wilkinson.

Beekman turned back to his desk and stood there, calm now, desperately calm.

"So you made me Governor just to get this pardon?"

Flomerfelt started to speak, but Wilkinson was before him.

"Yes," snarled Wilkinson, "just to get this pardon. Do you think for an instant that you were put here for any other reason? Or that you had any qualifications for the office?"

Leslie laughed a discordant laugh, and Flomerfelt, seeing at once that the girl was in complete sympathy with her father, stepped back behind them.

"There are many good reasons, Mr. Wilkinson," said the Governor, grimly, "why you should not be pardoned. Needless to say you know what they are. But," he added fiercely, for he knew that he had been tricked, "if there were no other reason, the fact that you had put me here to secure your pardon would make it impossible for me to act." He stopped and stared at Leslie, his eyes

unconsciously seeking hers for sympathy, but something there shocked him beyond measure, and before he was aware of what he was saying, he blurted out:

"Did you give me your daughter for the same reason? Did you, Leslie——"

There was a deep silence in which the attention of all was focussed on the girl.

"Mr. Beekman," she said, in a cold, hard voice, though her eyes were softly eager, "will you tell me once for all whether you're going to pardon my father?"

"I certainly am not going to pardon him," declared Beekman.

Leslie favoured him with a little stinging laugh.

"Then you'd better know the rest. Yes, it is true that my father gave me to you—I gave myself to you for that very reason, and no other . . . I made a big mistake; so did he. We should have made our bargain before we took that step. It would have been better." She paused to take breath, and presently went on in a voice that rankled: "You talked once to me of equals—and when you got this office you thought, at last, that you were my equal. I know better; you're my inferior. And I want you to know and to understand—and understand it clearly—that the Wilkinsons do not mate with cowards." And with

that she drew off her ring and placed it before him, crying: "There!"

An instant later, Leslie, strangling a sob that threatened to escape, hurriedly fled from the room, her father and Flomerfelt following closely on her heels.

XIX

In common with most men who have attained their ambition to be money-kings, Peter V. Wilkinson regarded the legal profession solely in the light of the ability of its members to provide processes for him by means of which the law could be evaded. Failing in that or in their promises of immunity from imprisonment,—which is much more to the point in this case,—their usefulness, naturally, ceased. Accordingly, from time to time, one after another of his superfluous counsel had been dropped, even Patrick Durand, able criminal lawyer as he was acknowledged to be, being forced to content himself with a handsome souvenir of his connection with the case, to the exclusion of any further interest in the expected spoils. Obviously, the old Colonel was retained, but even this field marshal of a hundred campaigns, when he arrived at the Wilkinson suite in the Remsen at Albany in response to Wilkinson's imperative summons, had to acknowledge that the battle of his life—the last battle of what he called the running fight—was on, and likely, so at least it looked at the present time, to be his Waterloo.

It was but little wonder that, witnessing the burst of rage with which Wilkinson had told him of the Governor's refusal to pardon, not to speak of the pitiful state of collapse in which he found Leslie, that thwarted and disappointed as he was, Colonel Morehead came to feel that there was little likelihood of anything being immediately done towards the forming of a new campaign. Practically, the Wilkinson advisory committee had dwindled down to three – a triumvirate now, as it were—for Flomerfelt, doubtless for reasons of his own, had returned to New York; and Morehead at once set himself the task of forcing the intellects of father and daughter to resume their functions. With the girl it did not prove difficult. Womanlike, and despite her horror of the inevitable, she flung aside her own personal troubles at the call of the Colonel for a consultation, and entered the conclave intent on helping her father in his last great struggle with an energy that she determined would be boundless.

"Colonel Morehead, why can't father go away?" suddenly said the girl.

"Why not, Morehead?" asked Wilkinson, fairly jumping at her words.

But the Colonel was still sullen. He was beaten, or thought he was, which is very much the same thing. Wilkinson, on the contrary, seemed to find new life in the moroseness of the other. And

for the first time in the struggle Wilkinson seemed to feel that the whole fight rested on his own shoulders, and Wilkinson was one who dearly loved to fight alone and single-handed.

"Why not run away, Morehead?" he repeated.

"How?" demanded the Colonel with little interest.

"The *Marchioness* . . ." suggested Leslie.

"And forfeit a million dollars bail?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Don't make any mistake," declared Wilkinson, "they'll never get me behind the bars again! Never! Not even if I have to——" A new strange note had forced itself into his tone. Leslie, feeling suddenly cold, crept closer to him.

"Don't, don't talk that way, father!" she cried. "It shall never come to that."

Morehead, even, was alarmed.

"Peter, you don't mean——" he began.

"I mean," repeated the other, looking sturdily at him, "that if they ever put me behind the bars, it will be after life has left my body."

Leslie uttered a half-strangled cry and buried her face in her hands. But Wilkinson only braced himself.

"We haven't got to that yet, Colonel," he observed. There was a pause, after which he repeated his question: "Why not run away, eh?"

The Colonel thought a moment. Then, taking

both Wilkinson and Leslie by the arm marched them to the window and drew back the curtain.

"Do you see that Italian fruit-vender over there selling figs to the swell? They're Murgatroyd's men, both of them. Murgatroyd's got you surrounded, sewed up, tied in. One of the elevator boys in the Remsen here is a New York County man; the chambermaid of this suite is a detective. Murgatroyd has sworn that you won't get away. It may cost the County of New York a million dollars, but you know Murgatroyd! And, besides, behind him stand the National Banks. How much will they put up to break you, eh? Murgatroyd will put you behind the bars as sure as guns —unless——" He stopped, his eyes were half shut.

"Unless——" repeated father and daughter, leaning forward.

Morehead did not answer at once. His mind was working fast; he was evidently feeling his way clear before committing himself. Suddenly he said:

"Peter, how long have you worn a beard?"

The question seemed so irrelevant that the millionaire started.

"Why, nearly all my life," he answered. "I've —I've never shaved. But——"

"It was so bristly," explained the Colonel, "that I thought it might be the result of shaving;

but everything about you bristles, so I guess it's nature and not art. When you first saw it coming, you let it grow, didn't you—and you've had it ever since?"

Peter V. did not like the turn the conversation was taking, and merely nodded.

The Colonel uncrossed his legs and sat on the edge of the table, facing them.

"How do you look without a beard?" he asked.

Leslie laughed aloud in sheer delight. The problem seemed to be solving itself, but how or in what way she could not see.

"Blamed if I know," answered Wilkinson. "I don't even remember how I used to look without a beard, and as for photographs, well, in former days those luxuries were not for me, you know."

Colonel Morehead stuck his hands into his armpits and rested his chin upon his shirt front. Presently he went on:

"Peter you know this is Murgatroyd's pet case. It's his first in his series of raids upon the iniquitous rich. He means to see to it that you serve ten years—less good behaviour. From the time you put up your million-dollar bail bond he has had you watched. Of course his task is a tremendous one. You and I know that time and time again we have eluded the vigilance of his men; and we know that we can do it again for a time;

but that doesn't alter the situation. If you should disappear, every hotel, every train, every steamship would be thronged with plainclothes men. You can't get out of the United States, and you can't get out of the State, unless—you can't, in fact, elude Murgatroyd for any time at all, unless——" Again he stopped, and again Leslie and her father chimed in insistently:

"Unless——"

"Unless you follow my directions."

"What are they?" quickly asked the others.

"You've got to leave your beard and your name and all your worldly goods——" went on the Colonel, but he checked himself in time.

"My worldly possessions being minus anyway," sighed Wilkinson, helping the Colonel out.

"You've got to leave, even Mrs. Peter V.," smiled Morehead.

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Wilkinson with mock solemnity; then he added: "I can leave the lady with eminent complacency."

"And also," went on Morehead, mercilessly, "you must leave your daughter."

There was a sharp cry from Leslie, but Wilkinson gave no sign. He merely sniffed hopefully, for he smelled freedom in all this.

"Go on!" he commanded, ignoring the quivering palm that Leslie laid upon his hand.

"You've got to leave them all and never come

back to them," continued the Colonel; and bending closer and lowering his voice to a whisper, he added: "Leave everything that you've got in the world, you understand?"

Wilkinson muttered an oath under his breath, for next to liberty his wealth was dear to him. In fact, he now arranged in his mind the relative importance of things: first, liberty—he must have that at any cost; second, the millions that he had stowed away; third, his daughter Leslie.

"Why have I got to leave them all?" he demanded, "and why never come back at all?"

"Because," said his counsel, "if you so much as plank down a ten-dollar bill for a railroad ticket after you disappear, you will be suspected. The county men, the police in other cities will be on the look-out for a man with money; they will not search the lodging-houses. You must not be caught. It takes nerve, but you've got to do it. You've got to say good-bye to everything."

There was a moment's silence; then Wilkinson answered:

"Where could I go?"

"Anywhere you like. Disappear. But don't buy a railroad ticket if you can help it. Don't try to leave the country, for if you do they'll get you. Don't do anything that a man with a roll of bills might do. Play the part of a tramp."

For a time they pondered the situation. The Colonel was the first to break the ruminating silence, and said:

"Of course your bail would be forfeited, and that would leave your daughter penniless."

This remark was for Leslie's benefit. Nevertheless he knew that after Wilkinson had gone, some way could be found in which his huge fortune might gradually be used for her.

"I don't care at all about being penniless!" cried Leslie, springing to her feet. "All I care for, is—but can't I go with father?"

"That's out of the question—they'd get me in an hour if you did." There was nothing paternal in Wilkinson's voice, for the primal principle had him in its clutch. Leslie was hurt by this seeming indifference to her; it was not given to her to comprehend fully that her father was making, in actuality, a fight for his life.

"You must understand, Leslie, that this means an absolute loss of identity, or ten years behind the bars for your father," explained Colonel Morehead.

Wilkinson rose, and walking to the window glanced down at the fruit man on the other side of the street, and then came back.

"How long time have I, Colonel, before——"

"There'll be no trouble about time," was the Colonel's reply. "I can still string it on for

months. Summer is coming on—the long vacation——"

Wilkinson rewarded him with a crafty, exultant smile. He saw in this plan nothing save success. Firmly he believed that there was some way after all by which, whether he was in Paris, San Francisco or some other place, he could draw back his millions, even if it had to be accomplished in the slow way that formerly he had drawn them from his depositors.

"Liberty first, then——" he said half-aloud; and turning to his daughter, whose presence for the moment he had forgotten, he added: "Isn't it more than bedtime, child? You must be mighty tired, little girl. You're a mighty loyal one, anyhow."

Leslie held out her hand to Colonel Morehead.

"Don't worry, my girl," said the Colonel, kindly, "it's going to come out all right. I feel it, somehow, and I know you do, too. Goodnight!"

But the Colonel's words did not banish the look of worriment on Leslie's face; and going over to her father, now, she clung to him insistently, pressing her flushed face against his breast, saying:

"Father, you're not going to leave me tonight?"

"Not for many nights," he answered, patting her head; and a moment after, Leslie withdrew.

For a brief ten minutes the client and his attorney waited in silence. Suddenly, then, Morehead stepped to a door and opened it, and a man came in.

It cannot be said that the newcomer was wanting in self-possession, and his bow to Morehead was one of respect. But that he stood in awe of Wilkinson, his manner while awaiting orders gave ample evidence.

"Sit down, Phillips," said Wilkinson. "Have a cigar?"

Governor Beekman's secretary helped himself to a cigar, and in fact made himself quite at home.

"Now then, what are we going to do with this man Beekman?" asked the millionaire, his face flushed, his mouth hardening. "He's got to get his—and get it right away."

Morehead held up his hand.

"Peter V., do you think it advisable to——. Why not let Beekman alone until . . ."

"I'll do nothing of the kind!" snapped back Wilkinson. "Do you think I'm not going to hit him back? I don't want that kind of advice from you, Colonel. What I do want, is for you to tell me the quickest way . . ."

The Colonel swung about and closed his eyes, puffing unconcernedly at his cigar.

"I think," he remarked mildly, "that you'd better leave me out of this. Vengeance is not in

my line. I'll have to leave that part to you and Mr. Phillips here."

"What do you say, Phillips?" demanded Wilkinson.

"*Impeachment,*" answered Phillips.

"Can it be done?"

"Easy as rolling off a log."

"Good—good as far as it goes; but it don't go far enough. We want to be as hard as we can."

"I think that can be arranged without trouble, too."

"How will we get him?"

"Suppose you leave that to me. You'll back me up?"

Wilkinson clenched his fist.

"Go the limit, Phillips—I'll back you up. The traitor! And to think that this man Beekman might have had anything he wanted."

"The *Reporter* and the *Star* will back me, too?"

"To the limit."

"We'll need public opinion with us, don't forg[illegible]at, Mr. Wilkinson."

[illegible]shaw, I'll take care of that."

"How long are you going to stay in Albany?"

Wilkinson raised his hand high in the air, as one about to take an oath.

"Until I've done up this man Beekman," was

the magnate's answer to the Governor's private secretary.

Two days later charges of corruption against Governor Beekman had been presented to the legislature. A petition for his impeachment had been handed up; and a committee of three appointed to investigate the charges and to report. What the charges were was not quite clear upon the first news of the affair; but that they were serious seemed to be conceded.

Upon the evening of the very day of the appointment of the committee of three, a woman stepped into the lobby of the Remsen in Albany and exhibited a letter to the clerk. The letter was written upon the private letter-head of Governor Beekman and was addressed to a woman.

The clerk raised his eyebrows imperceptibly, and calling a boy ordered him to take the lady to the Governor's suite.

At the Governor's suite the woman was met by a maid who unhesitatingly admitted her and escorted her into the Governor's den—a small room fitted with window-seats and couches galore.

"Are you sure this is all right?" asked the woman, somewhat alarmed at the effusive way in which she was made so suddenly at home.

The maid insisted that it was; that Governor Beekman was on his way up from New York;

and that he was expected at any moment. The maid left, locking the door behind her.

Alone in this room the woman settled herself comfortably back to wait for the Governor. She had not long to wait, however, for presently the door opened and three men entered the reception room. From where she sat she could see them, but they could not see her; and except for their being perhaps a bit unkempt, she noted that they were of the ordinary type of business men.

"I suppose this is all right," she heard one of the men saying.

"Of course it is," said another. "We've got a search warrant from the House, and anyway, we haven't broken in. I'd like to know how you're going to keep a legislative committee out of any place. We've got our rights, you know."

The woman shrank into a corner, fearing that any moment they might find her there. But they merely waited in the outer room, expectantly.

"Wonder what he'll have to say for himself?" queried one.

A second man laughed.

"There's nothing to it," he returned, "we're on a wild goose chase. Bribery? Nonsense! Beekman's as straight as a die."

"Suppose," said the third, "that we wait until we find out all about it. Suppose——" He broke off abruptly, for someone was knocking at the

door; and looking up he saw that two people had entered the room.

When the woman in the inner room perceived who had entered, she could not suppress an exclamation, which, fortunately, however, did not reach the ears of Leslie and her father, who were now bowing to the three committee-men.

"I beg your pardon," said Wilkinson, "but can you tell me when the Governor is likely to return? We——" he smiled awkwardly, "we were summoned by him to meet him here at this hour."

One of the Assemblymen, a New York man, leaned over to his neighbour, and said: "That's Wilkinson." Whereupon, the others rose and bowed, and answered:

"We were told that he'd be here any minute now." And as if in confirmation of his words, the door suddenly opened, and Governor Beekman, with a light but hurried step, came into the room.

"I beg your pardon," he said, when he saw who was standing before him.

Leslie turned to him involuntarily, and half acknowledged his bow; then remembering, she quickly turned away, and looked at her father, fixedly.

The three men pressed forward at once, the chairman speaking.

"Governor," he said, "you understand why we're here. You've had a copy of the impeachment charges."

Beekman flushed.

"I received them in New York and came up as fast as I could," he answered, a little brusquely. "What can I do for you?"

"I beg your pardon, Governor Beekman, but I received this note from you and have obeyed it. Can you see us first?" asked Wilkinson.

The Governor took the note, which was written on his heavy, private letterhead, and read it. It ran:

Dear Mr. Wilkinson:

Will you and your daughter, Miss Wilkinson, kindly call at my suite in the Remsen this evening at eight o'clock. I desire to see you at that time.

Very truly yours,

ELIOT BEEKMAN.

For a moment Beekman was nonplussed and looked from the note to its bearer.

"I didn't write this letter," presently he said. He paled perceptibly; his confusion, whatever it may have meant, was not lost on the three committee-men.

"You didn't write it," queried Wilkinson, coldly, "but isn't that your signature?"

"It looks like my signature," admitted the Governor, after scanning the writing closely.

"But I can't for the life of me think what I wanted to see you about." And turning now to the three men, he added: "You'll excuse us, please."

Leaving the three Assemblymen he ushered his guests into the next room.

"Comfortable quarters, Governor," commented Wilkinson; "almost comes up to mine at home." And switching on more lights, Peter V. strayed boldly into the inner room. "Hello, hello, who's here?" he suddenly called out.

The woman who had been sitting on a couch came forth. She was plainly agitated at the sight of the two men and the woman who now stood facing her, for Leslie, unconsciously, had pressed to her father's side. In the background, too, were the three committee-men.

"Governor, it's all my fault," said Wilkinson, somewhat contritely. "I beg your pardon for intruding on your—your privacy."

The moment was a tense one, the Governor not daring to glance at Leslie.

"There must be some mistake," he stammered out; and then advancing towards the woman, he demanded angrily: "How did you——" but stopped suddenly in amazement. "Why, Miss Braine—how do you come to be here?"

Madeline Braine drew from her bosom a crumpled note.

"I—I don't know," she faltered, "that is, I received this note from you and I came. I supposed it was about the—the Ilingsworth case. . . ."

Wilkinson threw a significant glance over his shoulder toward the three committee-men.

"The Ilingsworth case," he repeated scornfully, meaningly.

"They—the maid—ushered me in here," went on the woman.

"What maid?" demanded the Governor, puzzled. "I have no maid. And, what's more, I didn't write this letter—it's something that I cannot understand."

"It's something that *we* do not wish to understand," said Wilkinson, suggestively.

"I told you I would come whenever you wanted me," murmured Madeline Braine, waving the note, in her agitation, toward the Governor, "and I came."

Wilkinson chuckled inwardly. In an instant he turned to his daughter and whispered in a voice that could be heard all over the room:

"Leslie, clearly this is no place for you. A Governor who turns his apartments into. . . . Come, dear!" And he made a hurried movement to go. But the Governor was too quick for him and blocked his path. His face had gone white with anger; he cried out:

"What do you mean, sir?"

Wilkinson sneered.

"Do you want me to say it here?"

"You've got to say it here," returned the other.

Wilkinson waved his hand toward Miss Braine.

"Then please explain her presence in your apartments,—your private apartments, if you can!"

"I will not!" responded Beekman, looking at everybody save Leslie. "I will not, because I cannot. Nor will she, because neither can she."

"A complete misunderstanding all around," laughed Wilkinson. "Nevertheless, I prefer to take my daughter to her rooms." And again he made a movement to go.

"You won't take your daughter to her rooms until you give me a good reason why you're here, and why you choose to make these remarks," said Beekmar, belligerently.

"I'll answer the last part of your question first because it's easier. I choose to make these remarks because you're Governor of the State of New York, and as a citizen of the State, I have a right to object to a woman of her reputation. . . ."

"A woman of my reputation, did you say?" said Madeline Braine quietly, and so marvellously well did she succeed in keeping her anger out of her voice that not for one moment did Wilkinson

suspect the action that was to follow. In a trice she had seized him by the throat with the whole strength of her woman's hands and was pinning him up against the wall.

"Peter Wilkinson," she cried, "I'll teach you not to speak ill of a woman!"

But scarcely had these words fallen from her lips when she loosened her hands and threw herself into a chair, sobbing. With merely a glance at the woman who had assaulted him in this fashion, Wilkinson quickly hurried to his daughter's side, who seemed on the point of fainting. It was only a short time, however, before the woman had become calm, and Beekman, turning to Wilkinson, demanded:

"What is the meaning of this? So you know Miss Braine?"

Again the worst in Wilkinson's nature asserted itself; he answered the Governor's question with a question.

"Do you know this woman's history, Governor Beekman?"

The woman had gathered herself together and stood motionless with downcast eyes, silent, inert.

In his turn the Governor ignored the man's question and demanded:

"Miss Braine, do you know this man?"

The woman hesitated, while her eyes slowly wandered across the room and rested on Leslie,

standing with her hand in that of her father. A moment more and Madeline Braine had answered firmly:

"No, except through this Ilingsworth case."

"The Ilingsworth case!" exclaimed Wilkinson; "always the Ilingsworth case! Some day, Governor, the Ilingsworth case will be your undoing. Some day——"

Again there was an interruption. The private secretary pushed his way into the group. He was received by the Governor, with:

"Phillips, I'm delighted you've come. There's the biggest mix-up nere you ever saw. I don't understand it—nobody understands anything."

He stopped short, for Phillips stood facing him with a curious expression on his countenance, and holding out a folded letter.

"My resignation as your private secretary, Governor Beekman."

"Resignation!"

"My reasons are obvious, but they are nevertheless stated in that letter, and they will appear in the columns of the press to-morrow. It is quite beyond me to remain upon the staff of a man who . . ." Phillips' voice quivered. He turned to the committee of three, and addressing them, said:

"Gentlemen, much as I dislike to follow your instructions, I have, nevertheless, obeyed your

subpoena duces tecum. In obedience thereto I hand you the papers that you came here to find. I found them, not here, but in the Governor's room at the Capitol. I think this is all you want of me."

The chairman of the committee took the papers in question and read them, his associates looking over his shoulder; and when they had finished reading them they looked at each other with an expression on their faces, the meaning of which could easily be interpreted without the exclamatory assurance given by one of them: "By George! we've got the goods," highly illustrative of the situation as was that gentleman's phraseology.

"Well?" The Governor was speaking now.

For answer they handed him two letters, one of which read:

My dear Beekman:

I now concede that the inducement offered in our interview of yesterday was insufficient to justify you in acting in the suggested manner. Let me now say, however, that the situation has lifted itself out of the Ilingsworth case—we are fast climbing to a higher plane. The legislature will pass our Trust Company law, abolishing trust companies. I shall see to that. You must sign the bill—you must see to that. There is a step beyond. We need National legislation extending the power of National Banks—we need good men in the Senate. Let me be clear—these are the things we want: Wilkinson must be smashed. The first step toward that is the pardon of Ilingsworth, for the Ilingsworth case gets us public opinion—you can see that. Wilkinson has got to serve his term, other-

wise he is a dangerous element. Pardon Ilingsworth, refuse to pardon Wilkinson, sign the Trust Company Bill—all this you can do for us. We can do much for you—beyond you lies the United States Senatorship, and beyond that, who knows. . . . A good New York man is in line for many things—if he's got the backing. You will have ours. Better burn this letter.

Yours, etc.,

OUGHELTREE.

The Governor read this letter silently, unmoved, and proceeded with the other, which was not an original letter, but a carbon copy. It was addressed to Ougheltree and was signed by Beekman.

"*Dear Sir,*" it ran, "I am in receipt of your communication with reference to the Ilingsworth petition for pardon. I note everything you say and have considered it carefully. I shall do my best to decide this case upon its merits, and will advise you of the result.

Very truly,

ELIOT BEEKM.

"This letter," said the Governor, handing the letters back and referring to the carbon copy, "is a copy of my letter to Ougheltree; the other letter I never saw."

"But isn't it strange," asked the chairman, "that yours is an answer to the other. Besides, his letter is dated one day, yours the next."

The Governor took the letters again and looked them over still more carefully. Finally he or-

dered Phillips to go to his, Beekman's, private room and fetch Ougheltree's letter of that date.

"This is his letter of that date," returned Phillips, referring to the one already read.

"Ougheltree did write me a letter of that date, gentlemen," conceded the Governor, eyeing the other sternly. Whereupon Wilkinson winked broadly at the committee, and the chairman took notes upon a little pad. "But this is not the letter."

The chairman smiled.

"It's very strange," he said, meaningly.

The committee returned to the reception-room and took seats round the table.

"You understand, Governor," said the chairman, "that we are commissioned to report on these charges. We came here partly to get evidence, partly to get your statement. You understand that the Ilingsworth case is the pivot on which this turns."

"I understand that, Mr. Chairman," said the Governor.

"Do you mind telling us just why you pardoned this man Ilingsworth?" inquired the other.

Leslie leaned forward, drinking in every word. Even the lingering respect that she had for Beekman was fast leaving her. Her father had seen to that. Beekman was already sinking beneath the surface. Wilkinson intended that he should go down into ignominy shunned by all.

Beekman still addressed the men of the committee, but now he looked at Leslie.

"Everybody knows why I pardoned Ilingsworth," he said. "Ilingsworth didn't commit the crime."

The chairman poised his pencil.

"So it was a matter not susceptible of proof, wholly within your own knowledge and the knowledge of no one else?"

"Yes, that is true."

"Come, Leslie," said her father, drawing her away; and turning to Beekman he eyed him severely, and added "The price must have been big! Too thin, Governor—that's too thin!"

The next day the *Star* and the *Reporter* took up the hue and cry against him. "Too thin" was the *Star's* headline, while the *Reporter* denounced Beekman in scathing language; contended that in pardoning such a man as Ilingsworth the Governor had deliberately let loose on the community a murderer and an anarchist; and assured its readers that in refusing clemency to Wilkinson the Governor had in cowardice yielded to the popular clamour that someone should be made to suffer for the iniquitous methods of the great financiers of the present day.

"The present incumbent at Albany is a blot on the escutcheon of the Empire State," the editorial

concluded. "The sooner the blot is wiped out the better."

The next day public opinion was swinging strongly against the Governor. And, on his own motion, Beekman was suspended from office until the charges against him had been tried.

The next day Oughcltree's denial was ridiculed. What is more, the *Morning Mail,* Oughcltree's paper, did not dare to take up the cudgels in the Governor's behalf: it could no longer defend a man who was charged with being implicated with its chief, since to do so would be to admit its owner's part in the conspiracy. And yet Oughcltree was as innocent as a new-born babe of having written the incriminating letter.

In short, Beekman was doomed. He had climbed the hill and for an instant had stood in the glory of the sunlight, only to find himself suddenly dashed down to the bottom at break-neck pace.

But not even this satisfied Wilkinson. Closeted later with Flomerfelt in the big house on the Drive he ground his heel into the rug of his den, exclaiming:

"Never until he wallows in the mud, Flomerfelt, will I let up on him!"

And in all this what of Leslie?

Irrefutable evidence had been presented to her of the Governor's unworthiness, and little wonder,

then, that she had ranged herself upon her father's side. Nevertheless, there were times when she would shudder in silence. For out in the future it was certain that one of three things must happen to her father, and she dreaded any one of them.

XX

"I SUPPOSE there is some painless way of putting him to death?"

The voice was Wilkinson's. He was seated on the veranda at Cobblestone, his Morris County place, and opposite to him sat a complacent, side-whiskered M. D. from Morristown. The complacence of the M. D. was due in great measure to the fact that a check reposed in his waistcoat pocket. It was a goodly check, too; Wilkinson had been ailing, and the bill was heavy.

"I don't want him to suffer at all," went on Wilkinson. "I merely want him to pass away and not feel it."

"Humph! He's of no further use?" returned Dr. Parker Wetherell.

"Tigerskin is twenty years old, nearly blind, and can hardly hobble a step. My dear Wetherell, that horse has won me no end of money on the track! He's been worth his weight in gold! I hate to think of him as dead." He laid a cold hand upon the doctor's. "How about chloroform? It's safe, painless——"

"It's painless enough," interrupted the physician, "but it's not always sure."

Wilkinson's hand trembled.

"It kills men sure enough, doesn't it?"

Wetherell shook his head.

"Not sure enough," he answered. "They come out of it when one least expects it."

"Strychnine, then, or prussic acid?" suggested Wilkinson.

Again Wetherell shook his head.

"I wouldn't give either of them to my dearest enemy," he opined. "My advice is, not. . . ." He drew forth a tiny cigarette and lighted it. "My suggestion, Mr. Wilkinson—of course I'm not a horse doctor, and there's no charge for this—my method, rather, would be powder and shot—the old-fashioned way. . . ."

"Pistol?"

"Yes."

"A pistol bullet through the heart?" went on Wilkinson, his hand still resting lightly on the doctor's and his voice trembling. "Let's see, you know I'm going to do this thing myself,—a horse's heart is in the same place as a man's, isn't it?" He placed his hand on the right side of his chest about even with his shoulder.

"Good gracious, man!" piped up the doctor, growing red in the face with laughter. "Don't you know where your heart is? Didn't you ever go to school?"

Wilkinson flushed.

"Don't tread on facts, Doc," he protested.

"Your heart is right there," explained the physician, placing the millionaire's big paw-like hand over the right spot, and waiting until Wilkinson could feel it throb. "You hear it beat?" he asked. "That's where your heart is; but don't ever shoot a horse, or a man, either, through the heart unless you want him to suffer the tortures of the damned. He might linger hours in terrific pain. No, no, the head's the place. . . ."

Wilkinson shifted his hand from his heart to his head.

"Quickly, eh?" he continued eagerly, "and painless, too."

The specialist replied in the affirmative.

"Suppose, now," continued Peter V., "that we had old Tigerskin here. Just what part of the head would I aim at? Back here?"

"The temple," said the doctor.

"That's back here, isn't it?" persisted his patient, forcing a laugh at his own ignorance. "Where is it on a horse, anyhow?"

Parker Wetherell touched his own forehead, and said:

"Just about where it is on a man. Right here at the side of the head in front of the ear."

Wilkinson had withdrawn his hand and was tapping the table in front of him nervously.

"Doc," he insisted, "just put my finger on the

spot—here on my head—and when I get Tiger-skin, why then I'll know . . ."

The physician seized his patient's pudgy finger, held it for an instant poised half an inch from the big man's head, and then jammed it into the temple with precision.

"There," he exclaimed, "that's just the spot!"

"You don't say," returned Wilkinson. "I never would have thought it—and a ball through there would do the trick?"

"Man or beast—he'd never know what struck him." And then as Wilkinson removed his arm, the doctor sprang forward in alarm, and added: "Why, look, here, Mr. Wilkinson, you've smeared a lot of ink up there!"

"Where?"

"On your temple. Your finger must have dipped into the inkwell . . ."

Wilkinson looked at his finger with a grimace, then he looked at the surface of the table upon which was a round, wet splotch of ink. Upon the end of his finger, which evidently had rested for an instant upon the spot on the table, was a similar splotch; and when Wetherell had jammed the finger into his temple, it being still moist with the dusky fluid, it had left a small round spot on his forehead. With a hasty movement Wilkinson drew forth his handkerchief and started it on the way to his head.

"Hold on!" he suddenly exclaimed. "I'll get my kerchief stained, too. I'll go to the bathroom and wash it off, if you'll excuse me."

Wilkinson rose, but some sudden tremour seemed to seize him.

"Nerves a bit shaky yet, Doc," he complained. And, turning, walked through an open window. Behind the palms his daughter Leslie was reading a book; she had heard scraps of the conversation without, and glanced up at him questioningly. "Trying to find out just where to shoot old Tiger-skin," he stopped to explain, "and got myself all ink."

Leslie laughed, and he continued his way through the room and up one flight of stairs to the bathroom.

"A bull's-eye—a perfect bull's-eye that," he whispered to himself, looking in the glass. Then suddenly whipping out of his hip-pocket a revolver, he aimed for the small, black spot upon his forehead.

Parker Wetherell, M. D., down on the veranda, having taken from his waistcoat-pocket Leslie's check, was glancing on it with reverence; but soon the reverie into which he had plunged was rudely interrupted: a pistol shot rang out, followed almost instantly by a woman's scream. Wetherell leaped to his feet.

"He tricked me," he whispered, turning pale,

"the painless method was for himself, not for Tigerskin."

With an answering shout he ran pell-mell up the stairs. In the bathroom he found three people: Hawkins, Wilkinson's new valet, Leslie and Wilkinson, the latter swaying to and fro in the grasp of the other two. In his hand he held a smoking revolver; and as the doctor seized him, he smiled a ghastly smile and exclaimed:

"I missed it, Doc! Missed! . . . My little painless program didn't pull through!"

That night all Morris County, all New York, had the news, specials having been gotten out by the various papers to that effect.

"It's up to you, Hawkins," said the District Attorney over the wire to Wilkinson's new valet; "we've got to have this man alive, and not dead. You've got to be Johnny-on-the-spot every minute of the time."

And that was precisely what was the trouble, so far as Wilkinson was concerned. Hawkins was too much Johnny-on-the-spot to suit his purposes. Down in his home on the Drive Jeffries had resigned from his position, and the new man who took his place was one of Murgatroyd's shrewdest men, which meant that Peter V. Wilkinson, under a ten-year sentence, out on a million-dollar bail, was surrounded by a net-work of Murgatroyd's

making. Murgatroyd was seeing to it successfully that Wilkinson couldn't run away. Wilkinson had said that one of three things confronted him: prison, flight or suicide. The second seemed to have been eliminated from the program of possibilities; the first he had sworn never to endure; and as for suicide, Murgatroyd had said it was up to Hawkins. . . . But there were other guards also who interposed: Leslie watched her father as a mother watches an errant child. Wetherell, too, sniffing more big checks, suggested other safeguards, and called with undue regularity. Every servant in the household and even the pudgy Mrs. Wilkinson herself—Flomerfelt had warned her that his death now would upset all their plans—kept on the look-out. Morristown druggists were warned to be sure to whom they sold poisons. Express and mail packages were scrutinised with care. No end of precaution was being exercised to thwart his plans.

"Seems to be an awful lot of fuss about it," remarked Mrs. Peter V., as she scanned the daily press. "If I tried suicide, I wonder. . . ."

"Probably not," grinned Wilkinson, feebly, "unless you succeeded in the attempt."

Now Murgatroyd's men were handicapped in one respect: Murgatroyd never trained detectives to be servants; he trained servants to be detectives. Hawkins, the valet, and Watson,

Jeffries' successor, were born to yellow plush, and had acquired the detective polish later. Their handicap was, that they must maintain their character as servants. They must obey, must efface themselves, must serve . . . otherwise the game was spoiled. When Wilkinson roared a command which sent them off for half an hour, they had to go. But the intervention of the family now helped them out: it became an unwritten rule that Peter V. must never be left alone, save in the night-time when he slept in an apartment stripped of everything save a bed and chair. This last arrangement he consented to only after Wetherell had threatened him with sanatorium confinement.

It happened, therefore, that one day, Wilkinson, weary of this close surveillance, remarked to Leslie:

"Let's go back to the Drive, child. I'm sick of the still nights up here."

And indeed Leslie was not sorry of the opportunity to go. There was one reason in particular for this: Cobblestone was but a quarter of a mile away from the Ilingsworth place; and Ilingsworth's place, like its former owner, had become a wreck. It was overgrown with weeds, was falling gradually to pieces; upon it had been laid the heavy hand of disuse and decay. The heavy mortgage on the place had been foreclosed; the

property laid vacant, idle; it had become an eyesore to Leslie. Besides, vague rumour had it that the place was haunted—lights, even, having been seen in the rooms at night. It was none of these things, however, that had disquieted Leslie, but the fact that one night at dusk as she tripped along the road, a man had darted from the roadside, and laying a detaining hand upon her arm, had said to her:

"I wish you could help me find my daughter. I've tried to beg, borrow, steal even, to get enough to find her, but——" he had stopped to search her face, "but you're a Wilkinson, I see; you wouldn't help;" and letting her go, he suddenly disappeared in the shadows.

Naturally, the girl had been frightened. Afterwards, however, she regretted that she had not tried to detain Ilingsworth, for he it was, since there were mysteries about him which she could not understand. If he had lost his daughter, why did he not use the money that he had stowed away—the millions that her father had told her about,—and why was the mortgage on his place foreclosed? The mortgage on her own father's place had not been foreclosed, she was sure of that. And so insistent became the pressure of these doubts that one night just before they returned to town, she sent a servant over with a note to Ilingsworth. Leslie knew him for a mur-

derer, a forger, a perjurer, a thief, and yet some instinct drove her to this act.

" . . . Some time," she wrote, "when we are out of our own trouble, if there is anything that I can do—for Elinor—believe me I shall do it—the very best I can.

It now became known throughout the Wilkinson household on-the-Drive—and, likewise, to the inner sanctum of District Attorney Murgatroyd's office—that Peter V. Wilkinson contemplated a trip to Maine. There was reason for it: the city sweltered in mid-August heat. Peter V. had no house or shooting-box in Maine—his game being men, not beasts,—and accordingly a suite of rooms at a hotel was engaged by wire. Railroad tickets were purchased; trunks were packed; appointments made with his nearest and dearest friends to meet him there for a three-weeks' jaunt. Every essential detail was attended to; nothing was overlooked. But there was one strange thing about it all: Leslie, who usually accompanied him, was to be left behind; Wilkinson was going alone with Hawkins. It was his frolic; he did not want to be hampered by anyone. But Hawkins and the District Attorney knew that Wilkinson would not be lonely: a chambermaid to have charge of his suite of rooms at the hotel in Maine was despatched from the Borough of Manhattan; two bell-boys were installed; from

the instant that Wilkinson should reach the East Side pier in New York he would be attended by a drove of sleuths.

But did Wilkinson have any suspicion of all this? If he did, not by word or look did he betray as much.

On the day of his departure, Peter V., with a matter-of-fact air, handed to Hawkins a small, oblong, heavy, cold, metallic package, saying:

"Hawkins, just stick that in my suit-case."

Alone, later, the valet opened and examined the package, and found, as he suspected, that it contained another revolver, hammerless, sinister, ominous.

"Suicide in Maine!" He emitted a whistle, and added: "Not if I know it, Mr. Wilkinson."

He discussed at length with Murgatroyd the ease with which Wilkinson might throw himself overboard, or might shoot or poison himself in his stateroom. But "Hawkins, it's up to you to see that he doesn't . . ." was all the satisfaction that he received from the District Attorney.

Their preparations completed, Hawkins now stepped into the presence of his master, and announced:

"Colonel Morehead, sir, to see you."

Wilkinson descended to his Den, entered and locked the door behind him. After fifteen min-

utes of desultory conversation, he held out his hand, and said, his voice trembling:

"Good-bye, old boy! We shall never meet in life again—good-bye!"

Colonel Morehead stared curiously at his client. He asked no questions, but merely took Peter's hand within his own and pressed it hard.

"Good-bye, Peter," was all he said.

Wilkinson, watch in hand, stood at the open door.

"Look sharp, now, with those grips," he directed. And turning to Watson, his new footman: "Watson, time is the essence of this thing. Go up and help Hawkins, and be quick about it, please."

Out of the corner of his eye, Watson glanced at Wilkinson; that gentleman was holding his gaze upon his watch. It all seemed safe. . . . So Watson obeyed, running swiftly down the broad hall and swiftly up the stairs.

"Get a move on, Hawkins," he whispered; "he's down there all alone."

The multi-millionaire waited until Watson was well out of sight, then going quietly to the open door he passed through, and walking rapidly to the corner of the street, turned and disappeared —disappeared, and that was all that could be said about it. No, there was this to be said: His

trunks went on to Maine, and when opened there later were found to reek with poison—anæsthetics, chiefly, that stupefied and killed; while tucked away in one corner was a gun. Wilkinson had been cunning: he had done things under the nose of Hawkins that Hawkins had not surmised, much less seen.

But Wilkinson had not quite disappeared after all! There were some who saw him after his disappearance, though they were not members of his household, nor were they officials in the employ of the county or State: they were casual observers, mere pleasure-seekers down at Brighton Beach. For later on that day a man with a bristling beard stepped into Obermeyer's Bathing Pavilion at the Beach, stepped up to the desk, as he had done several times before,—for Wilkinson loved promiscuity—he was essentially of the people,—and nodding to the clerk, passed out his wallet, his pin and other valuables, sealed them in an envelope, writing his name quite plainly upon it, and handed it to the man behind the desk. The recipient glanced at the name, glanced at the man interestedly, then gave him a fifty-cent bathing-suit, two checks on rubber strings and a key; and Wilkinson, taking these, proceeded to his allotted booth.

"Can I check that, too?" the clerk called after him, referring to a brown paper parcel which

Wilkinson carried under his arm. But Wilkinson shook his head, and the incident passed out of the clerk's mind, for the next man was becoming angrily insistent.

Once inside his booth, Peter V. stripped to the skin and donned the bathing-suit. So far he had followed the prescribed method of bathers at Obermeyer's as well as every other pavilion in the universe. But at this juncture he departed from custom: For having donned the bathing-suit, he did not, as other men do, unlock the door and run flat-footed to the beach; instead, he opened the brown paper bundle and looked over its contents with considerable satisfaction. It contained a complete suit of underwear, clothing, hat and shoes—all second-hand; and over his Obermeyer bathing-suit he drew on these clothes, one by one, jamming the soft, felt hat upon his head. Then folding up the brown paper he tied it carefully with the string, and placed it in the side-pocket of his coat, taking good care at the same time to remove from the trousers pocket of the suit he had discarded a goodly roll of bills.

Now fully dressed in his new garments—leaving his own clothes behind, he left the room, and locked the door, forgetting neither his brass checks, nor to place the bathhouse key on the ledge above the door.

"So far so good," he whispered to himself.

Curiously enough, however, he did not join the crowds upon the beach, but sought another bathing pavilion a quarter of a mile away—Helmstaedter's—where he was not known. There he repeated the process: went to the desk; obtained a twenty-five cent bathing-suit, but this time he deposited no valuables, having none that were visible. Then with his second bathing-suit he stepped into one of Helmstaedter's dressing-rooms, and again he undressed, stripping to the skin as before, and donning now the Helmstaedter bathing-suit, he opened the door, closed it behind him, and took his way to the beach.

And now, since Peter V. had gone to Brighton Beach for the ostensible purpose of bathing, Peter V. bathed. But strangely enough, though he had Helmstaedter's bathing-suit upon him, he did not bathe from Helmstaedter's; on the contrary, he strode up the beach and bathed at Obermeyer's. An expert swimmer, he was known to the life guard, who saw him and warned him with:

"Better look out, Mr. Wilkinson, two big men had cramps out there yesterday. I had the time of my life bringing them in."

"Never mind me," laughed Wilkinson, "there's no fear of my having cramps to-day." And with that he plunged boldly into the surf.

When the life guard last saw him, Wilkinson was merely a speck far out upon the surface of the sunlit sea.

That evening, while all New York was looking for him, while Hawkins and Watson were being soundly rated by the District Attorney, while Flomerfelt and Mrs. Peter V. were laying new plans, while Leslie wept in the silence of her room, that evening one of the Obermeyer helpers making his rounds, discovered the clothes of Peter V. Wilkinson, the Trust Company man, in his booth. The clerk at the desk produced the banker's wallet containing hundreds of dollars, his pin and other valuables. But the bathing-suit, the brass checks, and Peter V. Wilkinson were nowhere to be found.

"Suicide," at once said the press; family and friends said "drowning accident," and the life guard backed them up. Furthermore, Hawkins produced the pistol and poisons taken from the trunks in Maine—evidences of suicidal intent. These strengthened and deepened the theory of suicide. Even Murgatroyd, after thinking it over, was satisfied that such was the case. As for Colonel Morehead, he would sit for hours in his office, staring at the wall, never coming to any conclusion. "Peter's certainly got me guessing," was the way he acknowledged his inability to solve

the problem. Nor did the ocean ever give up Peter from its capacious depths.

Of all the men in New York County there was one, however, who had a theory. This man was tall, slender, handsome, a man in authority. After the county detectives had given up the search, and after the newspaper reporters had faded from the scene, this man quietly went down to Brighton Beach and interviewed the clerk.

"I wonder," he asked himself, as under his gruelling cross-examination the clerk searched the remotest confines of his memory, "I wonder what Wilkinson had in that brown paper bundle, and what became of it. Was it drowned, too?"

But of all the people down at Brighton Beach, only one man *knew* the movements of Peter V., and that was Peter V. himself. He had had his swim; he had gone far out, ducked and swam under water for a distance, and finally had gone ashore near Helmstaedter's pavilion—Helmstaedter's pavilion, where he belonged and where he was not known. Dripping, glowing from his bath, he had entered the pavilion with hundreds of bathers and gone at once to his booth.

The rest was simple. Having dried himself, he once more donned the dry, Obermeyer bathing-suit, drew on top of that his second-hand suit of clothes, smashed his soft hat down on his head, and left the pavilion by the street entrance. And

pushing through the back streets and alleyways which were crowded with the cheaper order of pleasure-seekers, eating "hot-dogs," he darted into a barber-shop and leaned back in the chair with a grunt of satisfaction.

"Too hot for spinach, Tony," he remarked in the genial vernacular of the day, "so shave her off."

Tony did as he was bid; and when Wilkinson rose and glanced into Tony's glass, he looked upon a countenance that he would never have recognised for his own. In former days his cheeks were plump and muscular, his chin bold, and his lips expressive. But for some years now a beard had covered his face; his lips and chin and jowls had been unused. So that not only was he not the Peter V. Wilkinson of the present day, but he was not the Peter V. Wilkinson of any day: he was just a very average man in a second-hand suit of clothes.

"So long, Tony!" he sang out, and soon he was lost in the crowd.

XXI

WANDERING aimlessly through Madison Square Park one evening ex-Governor Beekman suddenly felt someone tugging at his arm, and swinging round quickly to shake himself from the other's grasp, yet glancing down to see what sort of a person had accosted him, he saw that it was a woman, that she looked pale and weary, that her clothes were very shabby, and that she seemed to be in sad straits. Instantly he was conscious of a feeling of pity for her, at the same time he was angry with himself, angry with the fates that prevented him from doing what he had repeatedly done under similar circumstances in times past. For Beekman, always a tender, kind-hearted fellow, had never been one to look down upon less fortunate beings, and rarely lost an opportunity whereby he might do a kindness to some poor unfortunate.

"What do you want of me?" he asked, not unkindly.

"I—I've been looking for you," said the woman. "I——"

The man pulled himself up quickly. Here was someone who knew him, and of late he had been shunning the sight of his acquaintances. Again

he shot a sharp glance at the woman: the intruder was Madeline Braine. The moment that he recognised her, Beekman was aware of a spasm of pain; too well she brought back to his memory the things he was trying to forget; nevertheless, he said with a pleasant smile:

"Why, of course, you're Miss Braine. I know you now. How stupid of me. . . . But what do you want of me?"

The woman did not immediately answer. She stood by him silent, motionless, looking vaguely into space. After a while she said falteringly:

"I—I don't know what I wish with you. Really I—misery——"

". . . . loves company," he finished for her under his breath while reflecting: "How can one man be responsible for so much?" for it had been borne in upon him that the woman, like himself, was a social outcast with the hand of Wilkinson heavy on her, still pressing her down though he was no more.

The woman seemed to have read his thoughts, for she broke in upon them with:

"Oh, you didn't know Peter V. Wilkinson as I did! I've felt his force, sir, indeed I have. . . . But we won't talk about my story. . . . Won't you tell me yours, for I know——" She stopped abruptly and looked up at him, a strange, pathetic look in her eyes. And whether it was

her rare beauty that appealed to him, or that she was so intensely human toward one who had been thrust into the gutter, at any rate she seemed like a bit of heaven opening up to him.

Therefore it was not long before he was pouring out into her ears all his sufferings at the hands of Wilkinson, and already he was beginning to like her because of the sorrow they had in common.

"Tell me," he said to her, "how can a man like that set my friends against me—hound me out of my clubs."

"I read about you and the Barristers'. You were treasurer—they claimed your books were crooked. I knew——"

"My bookkeeper must have been one of Wilkinson's men. Of course I made it good. But that was nothing compared with the charge itself—enough to damn any man! I had investments, mortgages, but how he succeeded in tying up those properties in a night, destroy the neighbourhood, cut their value in two is what dazes me. The power of the man is beyond me—I can't understand it."

"I can understand it all," she answered, "only you've injured him more than I ever did."

"There is Judge Gilchrist, for instance," he went on, "what hasn't he done to him? The man's reputation is gone, and as for mine . . ."

He held his head very high. "They may have robbed me of my money, my clients may have been forced to leave me, but there's one thing they can't do to me—they can't take my profession from me. The Judges know—they believe. . . ."

"But Wilkinson could have you disbarred if he were alive, you must know that," she insisted hopelessly.

"Never!" he answered defiantly. "He can't fool the courts. And some day I'm going to climb back . . . even if I have to crawl there on my hands and knees."

"I'd like to help you win your place back in the world," she spoke up, remembering his kindness to her, then she stopped, her face flushing with the sudden realisation which was forcing itself upon her, that who was she to stand beside any man in his fight against the world, she, a creature rejected by everyone, penniless, with a fight of her own on her hands?

"I shouldn't have said this," she went on by way of explanation. "I'm rather a weak ally to" —she paused to push back a stray lock that the wind insisted upon blowing in her face, but in reality it was to brush away the tears that clung to her eyelids. Beekman saw this, and his heart went out to her, for he knew that hard as was his lot, hers must be infinitely harder.

"It wouldn't have been so," presently she continued. "But there was no one to care for me—no one to care what became of me. I was a silly, vain creature like thousands of others. . . ."

For some time the conversation held to this strain. At last the girl put out her hand and said with a faint little smile on her lips:

"Governor Beekman—for I must still call you so—it looks like a case of down and out for both of us. If you'll give me your address, I'll give you mine. One can never tell, you know. . . ."

"That's very true," he answered sadly, and proceeded to scribble his name and address on a leaf of his note book, tore out the leaf and passed it over to her; then scribbling her address, as she repeated it, upon another leaf, he added with genuine sincerity: "If I can ever be of service to you, Miss Braine, don't hesitate to call upon me." He took the hand which she gave him, and once more their ways parted.

The next morning Beekman's superior—Beekman had obtained a job with the Title Company, after he had been frozen out of his law practice—called him into the inside office.

"I'm sorry to tell you," he began, "it's not personal with me at all, but the company have given me orders to ask you to resign. . . ."

"I knew they would," said Beekman, pocketing his salary. "I expect to spend the rest of my

natural life in resignation. I've resigned from six positions now, and am being kicked out of the seventh. I bear no malice to anybody except the man above. . . . If he's alive, I hope to get him one of these days; if he isn't," he smiled genially, "why, he's getting his reward right now."

The hounding of Beekman had become an easy matter. Once driven out of independent business and shunned by people of his kind, he was forced to apply for salaried positions. After that the story was always the same, except that each time he kept asking lower and lower wages, getting them until he was turned off. And he was always turned off—no longer was his resignation requested.

". . . we can't have a thief in our employ," was the customary remark. Some imputed to him hideous morals; others charged him with drunkenness, but always with the same result.

In the beginning he had thought of leaving town and going West; but the Beekman grit was in him and it declined to capitulate.

"I'll fight it out here, alone," he had told himself a thousand times, "here, where I belong—where she is. I'll fight—I'll never run away. . . ."

The temptation to escape he had put behind him long ago, but there were other things that assailed him. He had the name of everything that was disreputable, he knew that. Even the

newspapers from time to time referred to him as being connected with fracases that never had occurred, or if they had, had happened in his absence. Day after day, night after night he walked the streets with shame clinging to him. To-day he held his position, but never knowing when the merciless hounds of the Wilkinson system would corrupt his employers and turn him out. He grew shabby, shabbier, and all too swiftly, too. But he was glad of one thing: his pride had never left him; he kept himself neat and clean. He felt, though, that these were things that would slip from him as he slumped down into the army of the unknown. Many times he had to combat the temptation to take to drink, to drugs, to the comfortable vices of the vagabond.

"I've got the name," he told himself, "the name,"—and unquestionably Leslie believed it—for would not he have believed these things of his dearest friends had the evidence been the same as it was in his own case?—"And that's where Wilkinson was strong—he always had proofs. . . . Yes. I've got the name, why not the game?" he would reason, as he kept slipping down, down, down.

But through it all the same instinct kept him straight. "I'll stick it out alone," he kept saying over and over again. Leslie had told him once that he was a man of destiny, and he still felt it. As long as there was life there was hope.

Help must come to him in some form some day, and when he faced her, he must face her clean. Never once did he blame her for his plight. He saw too well and clearly that she, too, was the victim of the Wilkinson system, and all the more so because she was Wilkinson's daughter. In Beekman's mind the truth was slowly forcing itself that Leslie's plight was worse than his, for she was unconsciously the innocent instrument of vengeance.

"I've got to stay decent for her sake," he kept repeating to himself. But as time went on, one horrible temptation kept pressing, closing in upon him.

Night after night he haunted the more isolated East Side piers. Night after night he glanced down into the smooth, dark waters flowing silently past him, with a glance that held within it some deep meaning. Night after night as his body became lean and gaunt, as the lines deepened in his young face, as his pockets emptied themselves, magically, so it seemed, as he stared starvation in the face, the waters seemed to beckon to him, and death seemed, somehow, pleasanter than life.

The time had come when he knew, when he was assured past all mistake, that he was at his rope's end.

"I'm down at the bottom of the pit and there's no way up," he whispered to himself, and held out his arms for an instant toward the waters.

"There's no way out but you, you," he went on, his purpose clinging desperately to him. He stopped and drew back from the edge and crouched against the stringpiece. For across the pier something had arrested his attention. A shadow deeper than the night, and part and parcel of the night itself, was creeping toward the edge. This shadow was the only moving thing that Beekman had ever seen upon this lonely pier. His nerves became suddenly alert, for now he saw that this shadow was a human being—a woman bent upon a woman's desperate purpose. He watched the shadow spellbound.

Suddenly the woman lifted her hands high above her head, and with the wail of a hunted animal, cast herself off the stringpiece and into the river underneath.

In the twinkling of an eye he had jerked off his coat and shoes and thrown himself into the stream. He caught her as she came up, but she clutched him and struggled, not to save herself, but to cast him off. Like a maniac she fought and the two went down together, Beekman gurgling in distress. By some superhuman effort he conquered her underneath the water, and coming up, held her, limp and inert with one hand, while he swam slowly, for his strength, owing to starvation, was fast ebbing. Somehow he managed to climb up the rough sides of the pier, bundling her up ahead of him, and laid her down, unconscious,

on the stringpiece, where she lay for some time. When she had revived, however, the mania once more possessed her.

"Leave me alone, please leave me alone!" she cried, her strength returning. "You've no right to interfere—no right to touch me. . . ."

Beekman held her tight until her paroxysm ceased, and once more she lay inert in his arms. Finally she opened her eyes and looked about her.

"You're going to come along with me," he told her gently, forcing her on; but she tried to tear herself loose again. After a little while he succeeded in getting her to the street, but there, with some strength more powerful than his, she suddenly jerked herself from him and held him at arm's length, though he still held his grip upon her wrists.

"Let me go! Let me go, I say! I'm tired—tired of men—tired of men like you!" she wailed. "I want to go home—I want to go back to my father—back to my father. . . ."

And still he held on to her, held on until he got her underneath the street lamps, where he looked into her face. She was worn and haggard, but her dark, lustrous eyes were something to remember. "She must have been very beautiful," he thought, and wondered.

"Look at me!" he said in a voice that startled her into consciousness; "you've got to trust me! I'm going to take you home——"

"My home?" she cried feebly.

"Yes. Where is your home?"

The girl made no answer, but commenced to weep. At length, she said:

"If I had a home, do you suppose I would have attempted what you have just prevented me from doing? Home? Let me go, please let me go!" and again she fell to sobbing.

"Then I'll take you to my own home," he said; and added to himself: "I'm good for one more day there at any rate."

"No, no, no!" she cried, trying to break away from him. "I want my father, just father—Oh, father . . ."

"Don't fight against me. I'm going to help you to find your home, your father. Come, trust me!"

And the girl, too weak to resist him any longer, allowed herself to be led away by him.

In a cheap hotel on this same East Side a man sat among other men of his own type, drinking with apparent gusto a huge glass of beer. Between sips he smoked a pipe. His clothes were soiled, stained with tobacco, they reeked with the odour of the place. He had just finished telling a story to an English sailor, who slapped his thigh and howled in glee.

"That's a good 'un, matey!" cried the sailor. "But I arn't got one to match it, stow the luck!"

The storyteller's last chuckles had subsided and he had drained his glass to the dregs, when suddenly a man entered the place and thrust himself into the group that sat around the table. This newcomer was of a different class from the others. He was tall, square, handsome, and his air and clothes and manner betokened one of the better classes. The genial storyteller set down his glass, grinned once more at the English sailor, and then following the sailor's glance, looked up at the stranger. He found the stranger was glancing down at him with an intentness that was disconcerting, to say the least.

The stranger slowly extended his hand toward the group, his forefinger levelling itself in the direction of the genial storyteller.

"I want to talk to you," he said.

The man at whom he pointed faltered for an instant. His first instinct was to give the signal and get his cronies to bear down upon this stranger and throw him to the ground.

The stranger—who was no other than Leech, an Assistant District Attorney of the County of New York, who had become famous chiefly as the lawyer who had sent Peter V. Wilkinson up for a ten-years' term—saw the look, interpreted it correctly, but he only laughed in the man's face.

"There are three of my men outside," he whispered, bending down, and then straightened up once more. "Where can we talk?" he asked.

The other man lumbered to his feet and bowed awkardly, saying:

"Excuse me, gents."

At the foot of the stairs that opened near the street, Leech held the other in conversation for an instant—just long enough to permit three men without to see his man. None of the three knew who he was, but all knew that they should know him at any future time.

The next instant the two had passed upstairs, where the man had a room.

"Well, Wilkinson," said Leech, once they were behind closed doors, and passing over a fifty-cent cigar, "you turned it pretty neat, but you didn't fool me."

"I see I didn't," returned Wilkinson, limply.

"You were going to stay here until you could make a get away, I suppose," went on Leech. "You did it cleverly, but," he shook his head, "there was a man cleverer than you in little old New York—that's me."

"You're an intruder," retorted Wilkinson, leaning over toward the other. "I was just getting used to the life here—liked it, in fact."

"It's the butcher blood coming out in you," conceded Leech. "Reversion to a type. I suppose this is really where a man like you belongs."

"Who else knows about me?" asked Wilkinson, coolly enough.

Leech screwed up an eye.

"Did you think I was fool enough to give you away?" He paused a moment to watch the effect of his words upon the other, then he went on: "Nobody followed you up—nobody knows but myself. Listen, Wilkinson, and I'll tell you how you did it."

And Leech proceeded to detail Wilkinson's escape and the method of it in such correct and graphic terms that Wilkinson's eyes bulged wide with terror.

"How did you know?" gasped Wilkinson.

Leech crooked his forefinger.

"Because," he declared, "there's nothing new under the sun. The thing you did was done by a bank cashier in California ten years ago, and one of the few people who knew about it was myself. It's not down in the books. You thought it was new; I knew . . ."

They smoked in silence for a while, Wilkinson all the time staring at the other. Finally he spoke.

"Well, the jig is up, so far as you and I are concerned, and the question now is, what do you want of me?"

Leech hesitated a moment, before answering:

"I want a cool million to let you go."

Wilkinson grunted.

"When you told me you were the only man who knew, I figured out that was your game. But what about these chaps downstairs?"

"They're not county men," assured Leech, "and they don't know a thing about it."

"A million dollars," mused Wilkinson. "Where would I get it?"

Leech blew smoke rings toward the ceiling.

"I refuse to discuss that part of it," he answered, "only it's a million now. Later on it may be two, you know."

The banker knitted his brows.

"And what do you do for that million?" he said.

"Keep my hands off and my mouth shut, that's all."

"How long a time will you give me to think it over?"

"How long do you want?"

"Three days."

Leech shook his head.

"It will be three millions by that time; besides, this thing has cost me money. I've got to keep these chaps on the job, you know."

Wilkinson rose, and said:

"Give me until eight o'clock to-morrow morning. You'll find me here."

Leech thought a moment, and then shaking his finger at the millionaire, he said:

"Don't you try to get away, Wilkinson, because . . ."

"That part of it is all right," growled the

other. "By the way, won't you stay and have a schooner of beer? No? Well, eight to-morrow morning, then."

Leech left, Wilkinson looking after him wistfully as he went out.

"Clean-cut proposition, that Leech," he reflected to himself.

There was a tap on the door. And to Wilkinson's "Come in," Leech reappeared.

"I merely wanted to send my regards to Miss Leslie," he said, "in case you call her up."

"I won't call anybody up," growled Wilkinson. "My people don't know anything about me other than that I'm dead."

Nor did Wilkinson call anybody up. He merely stopped drinking beer, went downstairs and got a handful of black cigars, and then returning to his room smoked all through the long night, that is, until two o'clock in the morning. At that hour he heard a church bell chime and started for the window. In the moonlight the dingy backyard seemed peaceful and deserted. He took off his shoes and stole out upon the fire-escape; and climbing carefully down rung after rung until at last he stood on *terra firma,* he then started for a secret alleyway which, as he had ascertained, had been used in frequent evasions of the police. But no sooner had he started toward it than a hand was laid upon his arm; and

turning, he found himself face to face with one of Leech's plain-clothesmen.

"Taking the air?" queried the man, pleasantly, deepening his hold on the arm of Wilkinson.

"No," said Wilkinson, looking about the squalid backyard, "but I saw somebody moving around down here—must have been you—and mistook him for a burglar. Thought I'd scare him off."

"He didn't scare," said the sleuth, drily. "Shall we—er—return?"

They returned, the detective lounging, wide-eyed and comfortable, upon the fire-escape above, while Wilkinson drew off his clothes and slept like a log for the remainder of the night. At eight o'clock in the morning he was up and dressed; and at eight o'clock Leech appeared. But no sooner was he in the room than Wilkinson drew on his slouched hat and seized Leech by the arm, saying:

"Come on, I'm ready."

"Where are you going?" cried Leech, in alarm.

Wilkinson grinned.

"I'm going to give myself up to Murgatroyd," he said.

Leech winced. It was a blow between the eyes and he felt it.

"The devil you are!" he cried. "But why?"

"Because," said Wilkinson, slowly, "I know

chaps like you. A man who can be bought for a million, can't be bought for ten million, that's what I mean."

"Explain yourself," stammered Leech.

"When you get the million you'll come back for more. You'll never lose sight of me—eh?" Wilkinson's grin widened as he saw the telltale flush upon the cheek of the man before him. "You'd come back for more and more. That I wouldn't mind, but in the end when I refused you'd call my bluff—you'd kill the goose that was laying the golden egg. You'd give me up one year, two years hence—you know you would."

Leech was silent; he was floored.

"Besides," went on Wilkinson, calmly, "there would always be the danger of my discovery by Murgatroyd. The sword of Damocles would forever be over my head. I'll make an end of it; I'll give myself up. . . ."

"Just as you say, Wilkinson," returned Leech, feeling all the while that the other was bluffing. "I'll take you down to Murgatroyd's myself," he went on, now bluffing, too. "By George, that's just what I will do! Hereafter it will be said that Wilkinson may have been too smart for Murgatroyd, but that there was one man he couldn't fool; and that was Assistant District-Attorney Leech. That ought to get me the chief's job next November. Come on! I've got a taxicab—my men will follow in another."

Wilkinson climbed into the cab. At the second corner he called out to the driver: "Turn west!" Leech leaned back smiling at this new turn, and let Wilkinson do his own ordering.

"I want to get out here for a minute, Leech," he said, presently stopping the cab before a white marble building. "Come in with me. . . . I want to telephone to someone I know."

The two men, each occupied with his own thoughts, stalked up the steps of the Millionaires' Club. At the entrance they were stopped, and Wilkinson was rudely thrust aside. Leech got a cold and distant obeisance from the doorman, who nevertheless politely asked:

"Beg your pardon, sir, did you desire to see any member of the club?"

Wilkinson came forward and roared out:

"Confound you, I'm a member of the club—I'm Peter V. Wilkinson!"

The doorman laughed in his face, and again bowing to Leech, asked if the other was with him.

"Why, Bowles," roared Wilkinson, "I know you like a book. I'm Peter V. Wilkinson, I tell you."

Bowles started at the voice. He recognised it as Wilkinson's, but the man before him bore no resemblance to the Wilkinson that he knew, and he refused to believe him. And in the end, Wilkinson and Leech were forced, to their discomfiture, to retire.

"Hang it!" muttered Wilkinson. "He ought to know me if anybody does. He doesn't know me, and yet you did. How do you account for that?"

"I was looking for a bigger tip," laughed Leech.

At the next corner they stopped and Wilkinson entered a public telephone booth, closed the glass door behind him and then called up the Barristers' Club. Presently the man he called for was at the other end, was answering "Hello." Wilkinson smiled, for the voice held excitement in it.

"Peter!" yelled Morehead in delight.

"Yes, and I'm coming to the Barristers'."

"In broad daylight?"

"Yes, right now. I want to talk to you and talk to you hard. I've read all the New York papers and know all that's going on. . . . And say, look here, you'd better tell your people there to be on the lookout for a tramp and a con man, for they'll never let us in unless you do."

"Who's the con man?" queried the Colonel, not fully recovered from the shock that Wilkinson had given him.

Whereupon Wilkinson without reply rang off.

Fifteen minutes later Colonel Morehead threw open his bedroom door in the Barristers' Club and threw his arms about his disreputable-looking client.

"Peter, the sight of you is good for sore eyes!" he cried.

Colonel Morehead stiffened for an instant at the sight of the other man, and bowing gravely merely said:

"How do you do, sir?"

"Colonel," began Wilkinson, as he threw himself into a chair and stretched his legs wide apart. "I'll come to the point at once." The Colonel was all attention. "I note by the papers that you are keeping the legislature a devil of a long time selecting a new man to replace Beekman. You will naturally want to know," Wilkinson went on, "why we call upon you in such haste this morning." He waved his hand toward Leech. "Allow me to introduce you to Mr. Leech, at present an assistant district attorney of this county, and the next Governor of the State of New York."

Morehead stared at Wilkinson as one hypnotised.

"Why?" he demanded, at length.

Wilkinson did not answer at once, but drew him into the adjoining room where he related, among other things, the happenings of the last two days. At the conclusion, he remarked:

"A man who asks for a million-dollar bribe is our man, isn't he, Morehead? But there is one thing more I want to say: Don't you forget it that I figured out this thing myself."

XXII

Some few weeks after his visit to Colonel Morehead at the Barristers' Club, Peter V. Wilkinson presented himself at the Riverside Drive house. He had waited until he had grown a stubbly beard once more before introducing himself to his family, and then one morning, feeling very much as he looked, he had come in straggling, half-dazed, tired, bedraggled, a sad object to behold, but in spite of all he was received, like the proverbial prodigal, with open arms.

Then followed days of explanation and secret conferences. His family physician had diagnosed his case as one of loss of memory; Murgatroyd had thrown up his hat in glee; the county force at once became active; the newspapers chattered in cold type like magpies; and what is more, the final stay obtained by Colonel Morehead was drawing to a close.

But all the time that Murgatroyd felt that he had at last landed Wilkinson, Leech kept his own counsel, and secretly he was very happy. For did he not hold within his grasp the governorship, wealth, and in his arms, almost, the daughter of Peter V. Wilkinson?

They were sitting in Leslie's room at the top

of the house one morning, Wilkinson and his daughter. The father was puffing away at a big black cigar, and looking very much out-of-place in the dainty apartment with its poppy-covered walls and chintz furnishings, the girl wearing a far more cheerful look than had been on her face for many moons, was luxuriating in a silken-covered chair.

"It's coming out all right, isn't it, father? How many nights have I prayed that you would get away—even if I never saw you again. And now it's coming out all right." She smiled a sad little smile; presently she added: "You've got a man that the National Banks can't buy. . . ."

Her tone was the least bit cautious and reserved—as one who withholds judgment. This did not escape Wilkinson. But he pressed his point.

"You're sure you want Leech?" he asked. "I don't want to force you, but he's a loyal friend of ours. He's run the National conspiracy to earth, is brave enough to face fire for me—he's a true friend, girlie."

Leslie's eyes glowed. She caught her father about the neck, and hiding her face against his shoulder, she whispered:

"Of course I want him, father. I—I would not have anybody else. . . ."

"I'm glad of that," answered her father, nodding. "He's head over heels in love with you,

dear—and he seems, somehow, to make it a condition of——"

"Father," she interrupted, "I knew long, long ago that he admired me. I could tell—why, I'm so glad, so glad. . . ."

Nevertheless the girl was very tired, was keyed up to the highest pitch. Her father had but three short weeks of respite, Morehead could do no more, and the legislature was ready to appoint its man in the place that Morehead with some desperate instinct had held vacant for so long. It was still a race, a running fight with Leslie, and she revelled in the fight. It was all a part of a desperate game, with her father for the stakes; and she played it with all her might and main.

"You will grant a pardon to my father?" she had implored of Leech, struggling feebly in his warm embrace.

"Yes," he had answered, drawing her still closer; and Leslie had submitted, persuading herself into the belief that this man was the one man for her.

"You promise?"

"I promise."

Ten days later he resigned his office as Assistant District Attorney of New York; and two weeks later he was lifted into the high place by the legislature. One day after he took his oath of office the petition for the pardon of Peter V. Wilkin-

son was handed to him; and faithful to his promise, he signed it on the spot.

For what did it matter to him or to Wilkinson, either, that there was a storm of protest—the storm of protest coming chiefly from the office of Murgatroyd? What did it matter to Leech that his name henceforth would be upon the black list at the Criminal Courts Building? He had made good and had won his reward—or almost. At any rate, for one thing, he was Governor. . . .

The *Morning Mail* made but a feeble protest, for the *Star* and the *Reporter* had become bitter and exultant adversaries and gave harder than they took.

To Leslie the whole thing was a triumph.

"And yet it's a funny thing," she thought to herself, "that Eliot Beekman, who defended father, wouldn't pardon him, and here is Newton Leech, who persecuted him, now lets him go."

It was in the Den a few days later that Leslie found upon the leather lounging seat two fat volumes of the printed case of her father's trial. She picked them up listlessly and started in to read them. But she had not gotten very far when voices forced themselves upon her ear. One was Leech's—he had come down from Albany. For some unaccountable reason she did not want to see him just at this time. There was a wedding day to be set—he had pressed her on this subject

—and she was not ready to set it. She slipped temporarily behind the thick curtains that hung suspended by the wall, just as Leech and her father stepped into the Den.

Leech's attitude toward the head of the family, as time went on, had been growing more and more insolent; and to-day he was worse than ever.

"Mr. Wilkinson," he said, "I've done my part and I've been well roasted for it."

"That's immaterial to me," gurgled Wilkinson, who had become a different man. The lines had faded from his face, he was rounding out once more, he slept nights and ate with regularity, within him all was peace and happiness. The shadow of the prison had slipped from him like a noose—he was free. He looked at the other tantalisingly for a moment, and then asked: "Well, what do you want. . . .?"

"Just what you promised me," said Governor Leech, "for setting you free. I want my million dollars, to begin with."

"Come now," grumbled Wilkinson, lighting a cigar, "you've got the governorship—that's enough for any man, my boy."

"It's not enough for me," insisted Leech, alarmed. "I want two things right away—two things you promised me: A million dollars and your daughter Leslie; and the sooner she can marry me, the better."

Wilkinson laughed until he was red in the face, then he said:

"Look here, Leech, I'll compromise with you. You take half a million. . . ."

"Not in a hundred years!" exclaimed Leech, threateningly.

Wilkinson continued to chuckle.

". . . a half million," he repeated, "and I'll let the old lady, my wife, get a divorce, and you can have her. But Leslie . . ."

Leech gripped the table with both hands.

"Wilkinson," he said firmly, "the girl will marry me, never fear! She likes me, loves me, and she's promised to be my wife. But you've promised to cough up a million to me, and I want it."

"What if I don't?" growled the other.

"If you don't," cried Leech, "I'll let the whole world know that you've got a hundred million or so salted away in your daughter Leslie's name, and then you'll have a hornet's nest about your head."

"Never thought of that," returned Wilkinson, paling slightly. "By the way," he mused, "after Leslie marries you I'll have to find some other dummy to hold those stocks and bonds for me, otherwise, you'll get your hooks on them." He laughed. "Cleverest scheme in the world, boy—Flomerfelt and I concocted it. Why, look here,

I've been joking, nothing else. I'm not going to give you a million."

"You're not!" cried Leech, growing white.

"No!" roared Wilkinson. "Hang it all, I'm going to give you two. . . ."

"That's better," assented Leech, sinking back into his seat. "But when?"

"Leslie's got to sign."

"Can you close this to-day?"

"As soon as I can get her. Come on—she's probably upstairs."

Wilkinson and Leech left the room, and Leslie, her face flushed with the knowledge of what she had heard, crept from the room and through the hall back to the postern stair. There, in an empty room she crouched down until she heard them coming down again, then made a dash for her boudoir and locked herself in. After a while a servant rapped on her door and informed her that he had been looking all over for her.

"Who wants me?" she inquired.

"Your father, Miss, and Mr. Leech," he told her.

"Tell my father to come up," said Leslie.

Presently her father, with a document in his hand, entered the room, and smilingly announced:

"Just wanted you to sign this, girlie."

Leslie glanced at it cursorily, saw that it was what she believed it to be—a means of payment to

Leech, and signing, passed it over without looking at her father. He stood for an instant at the door.

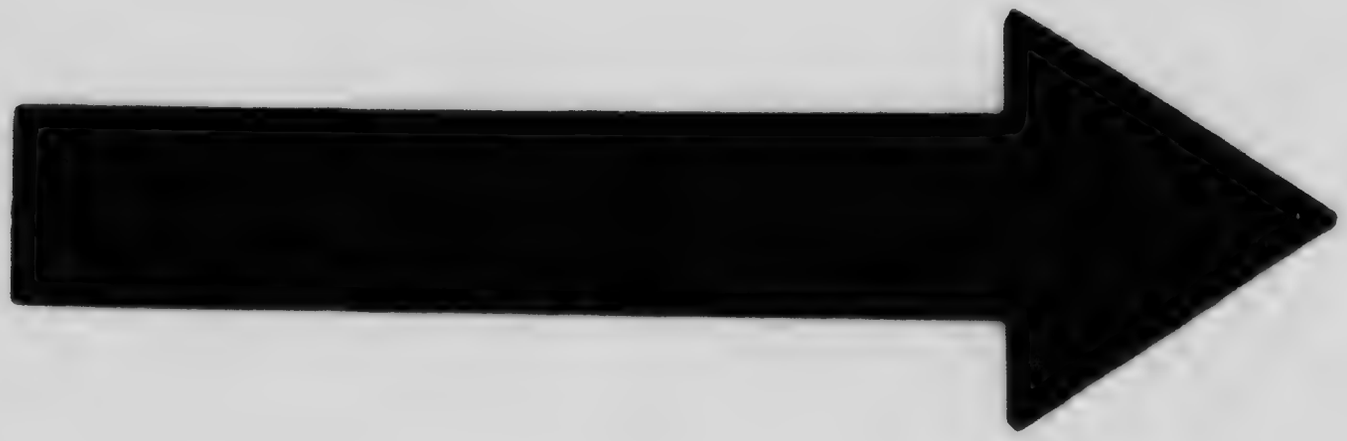
"Newton has come up to see you," he said. "The Governor is getting kind of lonely up in Albany—he can hardly wait to get a Mrs. Governor up there."

Leslie drew her hand across her face.

"Please tell Mr. Leech," she answered, "that I'm ill. I can't possibly see him to-day—no," she persisted, "don't ask me—not to-day." She pushed her father playfully from the room and once more locked the door. Then she went back to the window and read the printed case of the People *versus* Peter V. Wilkinson until the shadows deepened into darkness.

"It's all so clear now," she sighed. "How could they have acquitted him? How could Eliot Beekman have pardoned him, even if he had wanted to? Oh, he's guilty, guilty, guilty!"

Completely exhausted, Leslie laid down the volume and threw herself upon the bed, where she lay until the early morning sunlight peered in through the windows. Throughout the long night she had not closed her eyes, but lay there thinking, planning, some way out of it all. The morning found her resolved upon one point: She would never marry the man her father wanted her to marry.



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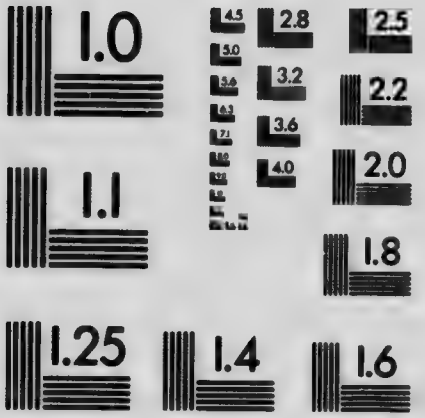

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And so it happened that some weeks later Governor Leech, looking down upon her, his face suddenly gone pale, his breath coming short, protested:

"But, Leslie, you can't mean it. Don't you know that I've held you in my arms, that my kisses are on your lips! Those made you mine. You've promised, your eyes have answered mine, you belong to me just as much as though—by heaven! if you don't belong to me for any other reason, you belong to me because I've earned you! Look what I did for your father—what I did for you!"

"You've been paid enough," she answered stubbornly. "I've paid you out of the money in my hands. Oh, don't stare! I know—I know. . . ." She paused a moment, her face flushing, her breath coming fast. "Governor Leech," she resumed, "while my father was in danger I could think of nothing but to save him; but now that strain, that terrific strain is over, and I have come to my senses. I can't even think of you, much less marry you with this taint on you. Yes, I broke my promise to you, it is true, but I had to, don't you see?" She lifted her head proudly, and then added: "I had to for the reason that I am just beginning to find out that I'm a woman, and that you, Governor—you are not—a man."

The following evening while Leslie waited in a

small waiting-room near the entrance to the house a man was ushered in—a man with grey hair and bowed shoulders, a man enveloped in a long cloak—for the mist was heavy and the night was wet without. Leaping to her feet, Leslie grasped him by the hand, and said:

"It was good of you to come, Mr. Ilingsworth, and you've found him, I can see by your eyes. Oh, how can I thank you enough! I was to help you, and here you're helping me."

"I'm helping him," said Giles Ilingsworth, steadily, but kindly. He straightened up, and went on: "I haven't seen him, but I've located him—I know the floor he lives on. He—he's always in evenings. They say he has a job with some labourers on the new subway."

"Come!" she cried, seizing his arm.

"Wait," he said, "why don't you send for him?"

Leslie shook her head.

"He would never come. I've got to go to him to-night. I can't wait another minute—not another minute."

In the open doorway while she drew her cloak tight about her, they stood and peered out into the Drive.

"We'll get a cab," she said, taking his arm; but Ilingsworth was adamant.

"There's one thing that I forgot to tell you,"

he went on, hesitatingly. "I—it's only what they tell me down there—they say Beekman does not live alone. I thought you ought to know. . . ."

Leslie flushed for an instant and drew back, and then pressed on again.

"I know," she said, "that is, I suppose—but never mind that. I've wronged this man and I won't let another day pass over my head without trying to right the wrong—if it ever can be righted." She tightened her grasp on the man's arm. "How can a wrong like that ever be righted?" she asked.

But Ilingsworth himself knew something about wrongs, and muttered half-aloud as he glanced at the darkened heavens:

"Are my wrongs ever to be righted?"

XXIII

BEFORE one of a long row of dilapidated tenement houses away over on the East Side of the city, the cabman halted. Leslie had ordered him to drive like the wind, promising double fare; and consequently he had covered the ground in a ridiculously short period of time.

To the girl, familiar only with the better localities of the city, the squalor of the place was appalling. It all looked so dark and mysterious that she hesitated for a time before consenting to go in; but at last, overcoming her repugnance, she brought herself to the point where she could make the ascent of the narrow stairway which led to Beekman's room, and she began to climb the stairs, clutching at Ilingsworth as they went.

"They said he was always at home," repeated Ilingsworth, knocking gently at the door.

A moment more and the door was suddenly thrust open, flooding the hall with light, and a woman, wearing a hat and a long coat, stood in the doorway. It was Madeline Braine.

For a second that lapsed into another, the women stood staring at each other, but did not speak.

"I was just going home," finally announced Miss Braine. "I——"

"It isn't true, then, you don't live here?" faltered Ilingsworth, blurting out things in his excitement that should have been left unsaid.

"Were you looking for me?" asked the woman. "I live at . . ."

"For Mr. Beekman," interrupted Leslie, in a low voice. "Can we find him here?"

Madeline Braine pressed her hand against her lips.

"He's asleep," she whispered. "They're both asleep."

"Both!" The exclamation fell from Leslie's lips.

"Who else is there here?" proceeded Ilingsworth, without formality.

"Nellie, the girl that lives here," she told him in lowered tones. "He takes care of her. She's been sick—he's had to stay up nights and work all day, and it's a pity to wake him up. . . ."

"He hasn't retired yet, then?" asked Leslie, inanely, for want of something better to say.

But whatever would have been the woman's reply it did not reach her lips, for just at that moment there was a stir, an exclamation from the corner of the room, and a man rising to his full height—a man, tall, strong, bronzed, clad in workman's clothes, cried out sharply:

"Who's voice was that? I thought I heard a voice . . ."

The woman waved the two out in the hall, and answered:

"No, she hasn't stirred."

Beekman stretched his arms, and replied, lowering his voice:

"I don't mean Nell. I mean her voice—Leslie's. Who's out there, Miss Braine?"

Madeline motioned to Ilingsworth and Leslie to come in, but at the very moment they entered a young voice rose from the next room, and cried in all its weakness:

"Madeline! Eliot! Oh, Eliot. . . ."

"We've awakened her," said Madeline Braine, contritely, hurrying toward the inner door. But Giles Ilingsworth interrupted her flight and caught her as in a grip of iron.

"Just wait a moment, if you please," he said.

Again the voice raised itself in supplication.

"Madeline! Eliot. . . ."

"You recognised a voice," said Ilingsworth to Beekman, "but I recognise a voice, too." He caught up the lamp and started for the next room, but Beekman was before him standing at the threshold.

"That's a bedroom," he explained.

"Let go of me, Beekman!" cried the old man.

"I know what I'm about!" And with a steady step he marched on into the next room.

All of a sudden a loud cry, a woman's cry of sudden joy, reached their ears. Madeline hastened in. The next instant, while Leslie and Beekman stood facing one another, they heard a muffled groan and Ilingsworth came out again. Holding up the light to Beekman's eyes, he looked into them sternly.

"My daughter," he said, "she's a living wreck, almost."

"You should have seen her when she first came here, Mr. Ilingsworth," answered Beekman, returning the other's gaze with interest.

"You saved my life, Beekman," went on Giles Ilingsworth, his voice trembling; "but for how much of this are you responsible?"

Madeline Braine pressed to his side and said:

"Let me answer that. Gover[illegible]ekman did more than save your life, he s[illegible]s—saved her from drowning, nursed her[illegible]r, lodged her, he has brought her back to life—back to you."

But Giles Ilingsworth was not satisfied.

"Let him answer," he persisted.

"There is nothing more to tell. Upon my honour, there is not," spoke up Beekman.

In sudden relief, then, Giles Ilingsworth started

for the room; and Leslie, pressing close to him, asked if she might see the girl.

"She needed someone to take care of her, and she found Eliot," she sighed a moment later as she stood in the shadow and saw Elinor lying propped up against white pillows, her eyes very large and lustrous, a faint smile on her lips. And then she softly left the room.

Within, Ilingsworth sat on the edge of the bed and babbled like a child, happiness suffusing his countenance; a little while longer and his voice became firm once more, had the ring of conviction in it, weakness had dropped from him as a mantle.

"I'm happy, oh, so happy, Elinor!" he cried.

There were no questions on his lips for her to answer; she knew there never would be. Nothing mattered to her nor to him now save that they were together and were happy in each other's love.

Madeline knelt suddenly on the other side of the couch.

"Mr. Ilingsworth," she whispered in a choking voice, "there's something that I've got to tell you, something that's been driving me almost mad, for a long time." Her face grew white and her eyes widened as she met the old man's gaze. "It was I," she confessed, "I shot Mr. Pallister."

In a bound Ilingsworth was on his feet, his eyes fixed upon hers.

"You!" he exclaimed. "You . . .!"

"Don't—don't let them hear!" she moaned, hiding her face in her hands. "I'm weak—I've always been weak, and if it hadn't been for me none of this would have happened."

"It was Wilkinson," cried Ilingsworth, clenching his hands, "Wilkinson is at the bottom of it all!"

The woman grasped at his sympathetic tone.

"Yes, yes," she answered; and turning to Elinor: "I was like you, dear—I had nobody to take care of me."

"But," he protested, "it was my gun. . . ."

"Yes. That day when you talked to his daughter I was there—behind the hangings. You laid the gun behind you on a table, dropped it there behind a book."

Ilingsworth placed his hand against his forehead and thought a moment.

"So I did. It all comes back to me now," he returned. "I forgot even that at my trial. I have never been able to account for its disappearance."

"I picked it up and kept it here," said the woman, placing her hand upon her bosom. "Some instinct made me do it. I was going to break with Wilkinson—I had made up my mind

never to see him again, and I didn't know but that I would need it to threaten him, so I kept it." Her eyes grew dark with anger. "Afterwards he treated me cruelly, told something, well, something that has ruined my life. I was in the crowd that day, and,—well, you know the rest. Don't—don't tell anybody," she pleaded. "They'd kill me, kill me before I had a chance to redeem myself. I don't want to die—I can't die. I did my best for you, Mr. Ilingsworth,—after I had done my worst," she ended in a sob.

Ilingsworth crossed to her side and looked down upon her kindly.

"My dear child, it was you that saved me. We all know what would have happened if the Governor had never seen you. I don't want to tell anybody, and I'm sure Elinor doesn't, either; nor am I sure that I am under obligations to tell anybody. I bought the gun to kill; you killed in a fit of anger. We're in precisely the same position, aren't we? We had murder in our souls and this man Wilkinson put it there."

"I want you to know," she went on falteringly, "that all the lies I've told, all the things I've done, all the weakness that's in me, he's responsible for them all. There was never anybody in my life but Peter Wilkinson."

There was a long silence. Giles Ilingsworth was the first to break it.

"Miss Braine, I've been trying to figure out some way so that we can all take care of each other. We all seem to need looking after. Perhaps my courage and strength will come back now that my own little girl has been returned to me. I've got to make a home for her, you see—there'll be a place there for you, too, always, if you'll come."

Madeline had not expected so much kindness, and the tears began to roll down her cheeks.

"May we come in?" asked a voice at the door.

And Leslie Wilkinson, a new light in her face—a light that was worth while, for she had solved a weighty problem in the last half-hour—once more entered, Beekman following close at her heels.

"There are some things I wish to say to ex-Governor Beekman in the presence of you all—some things that you don't know, though I've heard some of you charge my father with them," she went on, her face paling. "I learned the truth myself less than a month ago, Eliot," now turning to him, "that somewhere and somehow there are standing in my name securities amounting to a hundred million dollars. I know it's so—I can testify to it—they don't belong to me."

"They belong to Wilkinson," broke in Illingsworth. "I've known it all along, but I've never been able to prove it."

"They don't belong to my father," went on Leslie, her eyes meeting Beekman's in triumph, "but to the depositors in my father's trust companies."

Beekman looked at the girl in amazement; Ilingsworth muttered something to himself and was about to speak, but Leslie interjected him.

"One word more, Mr. Ilingsworth, if you please," she said. And again turning to Beekman, she went on: "Eliot, you know that I have money in my own right—money to do with as I wish. Therefore, I retain you now, not on my own behalf, but on behalf of half a million depositors in three States, to start a fight to get that money back. We'll begin right now," she concluded, her voice ringing with determination, "with Giles Ilingsworth. You are retained by him. . . ."

The fire leaped into Beekman's eyes; he sniffed with excitement.

"Half a million depositors!" he cried, hope growing in his voice. "That means half a million clients. I'm still a counsellor-at-law—the good old Appellate Division withstood all attempts to disbar me. Half a million clients—yes, I accept."

"What about the evidence?" queried Ilingsworth.

Beekman held up his hand.

"The Bank Le Boeuf of Buffalo—they charged these things. They must have evidence. . . ."

"I can furnish some," said Ilingsworth.

"I have overheard Peter Wilkinson," faltered Madeline Braine.

"And so have I," cried Leslie; "and besides, everything is in my name, and I won't sign another paper or pay out another dollar until everybody has had his rights."

Leaving Ilingsworth with his two charges joyfully planning their future, Eliot and Leslie returned to the next room.

"We've got a long fight ahead, Leslie—a running fight, as Colonel Morehead calls it, but I'm ready. Come, we begin to-night—we cannot start too soon."

"You remind me of that night," Leslie whispered, "that night when you brought the ring." He seemed scarcely to hear her, the room was reeling about him. But the girl, knowing that she must do the wooing if she were to win him back at all, went over to him, and, laying an affectionate hand upon his shoulder as she looked up into his eyes, she said very tenderly now:

"Eliot, if we're going to fight, don't you think we'll fight better if we fight together? I wouldn't dare to ask you this if I didn't see the hunger in your eyes for me just as the hunger is in my heart

for you. And Eliot," she went on, nestling closer all the while, "won't you marry me to-night—won't you say you will?"

This sudden rush of happiness was too much for Beekman, and he could hardly speak. For answer he drew his arm round her waist and pressed her close to him, their lips meeting in one long kiss, as they had that night so long ago, when she had promised herself to him.

A little while later, Beekman drew his shabby coat about him, but Leslie saw nothing but the man underneath it. His shoulders that had been drooping under the burden of adversity, when she entered the room, now squared themselves; his mouth was firm, and his eyes sparkled as side by side they passed out into the darkness.

"What do you want of me?" Wilkinson was saying as he glanced first at Flomerfelt and then at his wife. They had bearded him in his Den a little while before, broken in upon his reverie, and instinctively he felt that their presence there augured no good to him.

It was Flomerfelt who answered:

"Thirds, Wilkinson. One-third for me and one for Mrs. Wilkinson."

"By what right do you demand it?" asked Peter V., lolling back in his chair. "And you?" he added, looking at his wife.

"I'll tell everything——" began Mrs. Peter V. But Flomerfelt interposed with:

"She's your wife, Wilkinson." And lowering his voice, he continued: "Your property is personalty, stocks and bonds. In case of your death she would be entitled to a third. She merely asks her right."

"In case of my death," mused Wilkinson. "But I'm not going to die—not yet," he added, a moment later.

Flomerfelt's brows contracted, his eyes narrowed, he looked Wilkinson full in the face.

"How do you know you're not?" he asked.

"Is that a threat?" asked Wilkinson, rising.

Flomerfelt, who hoped in the long run to wind up in Paris with two-thirds of Peter's hidden fortune, for he expected that Mrs. Peter V., with her third, in time would join him there, was glad to note that at his suggestion of death the woman had regarded him once more with fear. She had believed him responsible for the death of Roy Pallister, and he had fostered this belief, had held her within the circle of conspiracy, had held her as one chargeable, too, with death of the boy. It was a safe venture, for not once had he by word of mouth connected himself with that tragedy. Indeed, he had not the slightest idea as to who was responsible for it, but all through he felt that Mrs. Peter V., believing him responsible, felt

"We've got a long fight ahead, Leslie—a running fight, as Colonel Morehead calls it, but I'm ready"

herself mixed up, felt, too, perhaps, that they had gone too far. And, watching her out of the tail of his eye, he held his glance impudently upon Wilkinson's face.

"Not a threat, but a surmise," he answered in the same even tone. "People have sought your life before, you know," he went on, his face breaking out into a disagreeable smile, "and even you have attempted suicide. If you should die, what would become of her?"

"When I die will be time enough to talk about it," snarled Wilkinson. And thrusting his face now into that of the other, he demanded: "Come, what's the game? Lay your cards down on the table—out into the open. Why do you want a third. . . .?"

"Chiefly because I've earned it."

"Earned it! I took you out of the gutter, you ingrate!"

Flomerfelt shrugged his shoulders.

"If I haven't earned it so far, then I shall earn it in the future," he said.

"How?"

"By keeping silent in the presence of one person."

"Who?"

Flomerfelt smiled, but did not answer.

"Leslie Wilkinson, of course," put in Mrs. Peter V.

"I don't understand," muttered Wilkinson, once more puffing on his cigar. "Why silent in her presence? What's that to me?"

"It isn't necessary to go over the facts," returned Flomerfelt. "To be brief, you've got a mint of money in her hands which she knows nothing about. You know where it is, the missus knows, and I know. Some chaps in Vienna know, thirds for us, or tell her. . . ?"

Peter laughed aloud.

"Tell her if you want to," he roared. "But do you suppose she'd give the game away? She! Why, she's the only trump I ever had about me! She'll stick through thick and thin! Tell her and be hanged!"

Flomerfelt held up his hands, saying:

"I must say that you don't know your own daughter."

"You're a fool, Peter!" said his wife, sharply.

"The instant the girl knows, it's all up with you, my friend," went on Flomerfelt. "But she needs managing, watching. It takes more than you to manage, to watch her, too. What is it—thirds for us, or tell her. . . ."

Peter turned his back upon them.

"Tell her and be hanged!" he said.

Flomerfelt's eyes sought those of the lady. "What's the next move?" hers seemed to ask of him. A smile of cunning crossed his face.

"Then, Peter, we'll tell the public," he ventured.

Peter swung about, crying:

"Ah, why didn't you get down to that in the first place! I can understand that—I've understood it all along—you were bound to hold me up. I'm used to that—have had it all my life. Now, look here, Flomerfelt, I'm through with you—through with both of you. But I'm willing to be fair. I bought Leech with a million dollars, as you know. And I'll do the same with you—with her. You can take it or leave it, just as you please."

"It's not enough," spoke up Flomerfelt.

"I should think not," said the lady.

Peter V. took out his watch and said:

"I'll give you just one minute to accept."

Flomerfelt took out his watch, and answered:

"I'll give you two minutes to divide with us."

At the end of a minute they were glaring into each other's faces like beasts of prey. Wilkinson held up his hand and repeated:

"You can take it or leave it, just as you please."

"Thirds or nothing," answered the other stubbornly, at which reply Wilkinson thrust his watch into his pocket and strolled toward the door, where he waited until Flomerfelt raised his hand; and in that brief moment it was borne in upon him

that he was not the Wilkinson of old, that he had, somehow, lost his grip.

"You decline?" asked Flomerfelt. "All right! Then to-morrow the whole story goes to Leslie Wilkinson."

"What whole story, Mr. Flomerfelt?" asked a young woman, now entering the room, and so pleasantly that for a moment Flomerfelt fell back aghast.

"What story, Mr. Flomerfelt?" she repeated. But again he did not answer. And her father, taking his courage in both hands, came forward and said:

"The time has come, girlie, when you've got to make a choice for life—you've got to tell me where you stand—on my side or theirs."

Leslie slowly retreated to the door; a man entered and stood beside her.

"I've made my choice, father. This is Eliot Beekman, my husband," she announced bravely, a smile on her lips.

Wilkinson could not believe his ears. For a moment he did not speak, but looked helplessly from one to the other; and Leslie, waiting for the words that did not come, saw her stepmother grow pale, saw Flomerfelt's fingers stealthily grope into the depths of his sleeves, draw down his cuffs, and heave a sigh as he watched the latter settle into place.

"Yes, father, I've made my choice," she repeated, placing her hand in Beekman's.

It was indeed an odd-looking pair that Wilkinson looked upon: the girl all smiles and gladness, happy in the love that she had at last won; the man, a scarecrow, almost, his ragged coat revealing a ragged flannel shirt and clothes worn threadbare. He frowned. For an instant he seemed vengeance personified.

"You——" faltered her father.

"Mr. Wilkinson," cried Beekman, advancing to that individual, "I've come back to strip you naked as the day you were born, and I'm going to do it, too."

"You'll have a good time doing it," Wilkinson answered with bravado, although a growing fear was upon him.

"I expect to, I assure you," returned the other, "for I represent the depositors in your rotten banks. Once they sought your life, Mr. Wilkinson,"—for even he didn't know the truth,—"and now they're after money—the money that belongs to them and not to you. I've started in to get it, I've come to get possession of it, to find out where it is."

"You'll have a good time doing it," was all that Peter V. could find, apparently, to say.

"All I want to know is the name of the safe

deposit vault where you keep your securities. I'll be content with that, Mr. Wilkinson."

"What securities?" Wilkinson paled.

"All of them—everything," answered Beekman.

Wilkinson started, glared at Leslie, then he sank into a chair, for he saw that she knew and had judged him, condemned him.

"You see, what you got for your pains," Wilkinson said presently to Flomerfelt, sneeringly.

Flomerfelt nodded; but as the two men stared at each other, they registered a silent pact; Flomerfelt agreed with Wilkinson, and Wilkinson agreed with Flomerfelt, that there should be a truce.

This Beekman was a common enemy, and there must be no disclosures now: to give the game away would be to rob them both of everything.

"You may as well answer, Mr. Wilkinson," continued Beekman, "for I'm determined on cleaning you up from top to toe. I'm your enemy and I shall make it my business to represent every other enemy you have. I've begun with Illingworth. I'm going to clear his name, put him where he belongs; I'm going to clear up mysteries and let daylight into the hidden places,—every mystery from the giving of your million-dollar bail-bond to the secret of your pardon. Nothing shall escape me, I'll even ferret out the mystery

of the death of Pallister, for," and his finger pointed straight toward Wilkinson, "for all I know you're at the bottom of that thing yourself."

"Fidelity Deposit vaults," came gasping from the throat of Mrs. Peter V. from the other side of the room; and holding out her hands pleadingly toward Beekman, she added:

"I had nothing, nothing whatever, to do with the murder of Roy. I am innocent, I can prove my innocence. I'll tell all I know. The Fidelity Deposit vaults—that's where. . . ." She sank cowering into a chair.

Flomerfelt realised now that he had made an egregious blunder in his method of the past: this wholesome fear that he had instilled in her had been his own undoing, a boomerang. But he was not yet through; he saw another loophole open for him.

"Peter," he cried, "come to my terms and I'll help you to fight. If you don't——"

Beekman stood by with folded arms. He had come there in a sort of frenzy, to give vent to his pent-up sense of injury. He had regretted his coming, it is true, the instant he stepped inside of the room. Yet it was this same frenzy, this determined air of his, this sweeping into the open and offering fight, they had really done the trick, struck terror to the hearts of all three.

And now he actually smiled. Flomerfelt's game suddenly became clear, and Beekman knew that they were playing right into his hands. So he waited in silence.

"Wilkinson," cried Flomerfelt, with quick, incisive tones, like dagger thrusts they were, "which shall it be?"

"Neither!" exclaimed Wilkinson, his clenched hand crashing down upon the table, and then going over to his son-in-law, he laid his chubby hand upon his shoulder and said: "Eliot, my boy, you've got me beat—but I'm going to surrender, and—" he leered at Flomerfelt and Mrs. Peter V.; then added: "and not to be given up."

A moment later Flomerfelt started softly for the door, followed by Mrs. Peter V. But Beekman barred the way.

"Hold on there!" he cried. "Peter V. Wilkinson possibly is immune from further criminal prosecution, but I don't know about you two. But whatever part you've had in the conspiracy you may be sure that I'll find out. There's no escape for you."

THE END